

AFGHAN WAR CRIMES • WAR IN COLOMBIA • MARCOS, THE THIEF

# In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

September 2, 2002

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HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY*

*DAVID MOBERG REPORTS*

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## Editorial

# The Case Against Bush

Some corporate crooks get hauled off to jail. Some suffer public humiliation at the hands of the media and congressional inquiries. Others somehow emerge unscathed, their reputations and fortunes intact. Like George W. Bush.

**1986.** Harken Oil and Gas purchases Spectrum 7, the oil company where George W. Bush works as CEO. Harken pays Spectrum's owners \$2 million worth of Harken stock, of which about \$500,000 goes to Bush. But Spectrum carries a debt of \$3 million. Six months earlier, it had posted a \$400,000 loss. Bush is made a director of Harken, receiving as much as \$120,000 in consulting fees and \$131,250 in stock options.

**1989.** Bush and other investors buy the Texas Rangers for \$86 million. To buy his stake, Bush borrows \$500,000 from a Midland, Texas, bank where he was once a director. He later puts \$106,302 more into the team. His partners reward Bush for his participation in the venture and give him an additional 10 percent ownership of the team.

**Spring 1989.** Harken directors conspire to hide company losses. As Enron executives would do later, Harken executives set up a front company, borrow money from Harken and acquire Aloha Petroleum, a Harken subsidiary, at an inflated price. Thus, Harken profits rise and the company's dire financial situation remains hidden.

**June 15, 1989.** Harken President and CEO Mikel Faulkner writes to board member Bush praising him for his "intuitive analysis" on "various acquisitions" and "operating decisions."

**June 22, 1990.** With Harken in financial trouble, Bush sells some of his Harken stock for \$848,560 (at a price of about \$4 a share). Bush uses the money to pay off the loan he took out to buy the Texas Rangers. The broker who arranged the deal won't say who the unnamed buyer of Bush's stock was. Bush fails to report the sale to the SEC and breaks the law.

**August 1990.** Harken posts a loss of \$23.2 million, causing the stock to fall to \$2.37.

**1991.** Citizens in Arlington, Texas, vote for a sales tax increase that will raise \$135 million to build the Rangers a new stadium. Later, Bush and friends deploy their political clout and use "eminent domain" to secure valuable land surrounding the stadium site. All told, Rangers owners even-

tually rake in more than \$200 million in public subsidies.

**April 1991.** The SEC launches an insider trading investigation against Bush for his prescient sale of Harken stock. The chairman of the SEC at the time, Richard Breeden, is a Bush Sr. appointee. Breeden's SEC office is festooned with so many photos of the president that it gives a *New York Times* reporter cause to write, "George Bush is Breeden's Mao." The general counsel of the SEC is James Doty, who had previously worked as George W. Bush's lawyer on Rangers business. Both Breeden and Doty would later become significant Bush campaign contributors.

**1993.** The SEC drops its investigation of Bush. The chief investigator says, "There was no case there." His deputy, however, writes in a memo that the investigation's end "must in no way be construed as indicating that the party has been exonerated."

**October 1994.** Bush says, "The SEC fully investigated the stock deal. I was exonerated."

**1998.** Bush and fellow Rangers owners sell their team, its value enhanced by the publicly funded new stadium complex, for \$250 million. Bush himself rakes in \$14.5 million, a 25-fold return on his initial investment of \$606,302—which, of course, he had paid for with the prescient sale of Harken stock.

**July 8, 2002.** Bush says that reporters curious about his involvement in Harken's financial fraud should "look back on the directors' minutes." Harken refuses to release those records. The White House says it will not ask Harken to do so.

## Whether in the world of finance or politics, for George W. Bush fraud is the name of the game.

**July 9.** Bush tells a Wall Street audience, "Corporate officers who benefit from false accounting statements should forfeit all money gained by their fraud."

Asked questions about Harken's fraudulent finances, Bush told reporters, "In the corporate world, sometimes things aren't exactly black and white when it comes to accounting procedures." However, in ethics, right and wrong are sometimes as clear as black and white. Whether in the world of finance or politics, for George W. Bush fraud is the name of the game.

—Joel Bleifuss

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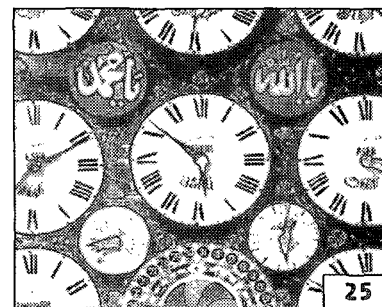
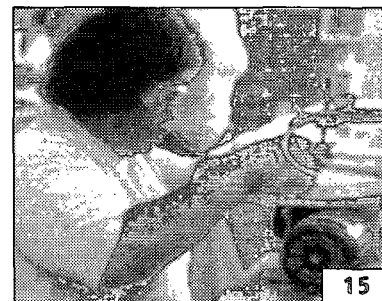
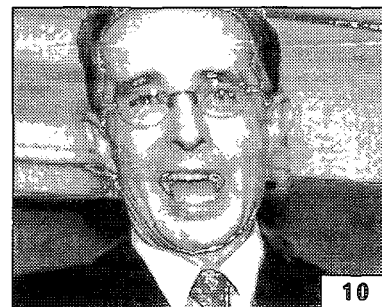
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## 30 Bread and Roses

By Christopher Capozzola

Ralph Fasanella's America.

Cover: Seamus Holman



## Peace Is Possible

While I agree with David Koppelman that suicide bombing is to be condemned, it should be recognized that it is an act of desperation by people who have no power ("Letters," June 24). Ending the motivation for it would be far more effective than using military force.

But Koppelman is overly generous as to Barak's effort at negotiation. At Camp David in July 2000, Barak tried to pressure Yasser Arafat into accepting baselines for an agreement that allowed Israel to keep an additional 9 percent of the West Bank in exchange for the equivalent of 1 percent elsewhere. In view of the fact that Arafat had agreed at Oslo to accept a solution based on U.N. Resolution 242, which would leave the Palestinians only 22 percent of their former homeland, Arafat could not be expected to settle for even less.

They were close to agreement at Taba in January 2001, however. An equal exchange of about 3 percent of land that would allow Israel to annex settlements along the border was on the table. While the Palestinian side continued to demand the return of refugees to their homes, they indicated that they were prepared to be flexible about implementing the right of return in order to accommodate Israeli concerns.

It's too bad the near-agreement at Taba wasn't on the table at Camp David.

**A. Rice**  
Great Falls, Virginia

## Kashmir Solution

Though the tension over Kashmir between India and Pakistan has eased, following U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's recent visit to both countries, the crisis is likely to flare up again if no lasting solution to the Kashmir problem is found ("Back to the Brink," July 8).

Unless a mutually acceptable solution can be found, the conflict will inevitably flare up again as extremists continue to stoke the crisis. In this context, it may be worthwhile to look toward the Good Friday Agreement concluded in 1998 to end the conflict in Northern Ireland as a practical blueprint for the resolution of the seemingly intractable conflict in Kashmir.

Kashmir could become a self-governing body within India while Pakistan will have a say in cross-border institutions established under the agreement. A joint India-Pakistan Kashmir commission, on the lines of the Anglo-Irish commission in Northern Ireland,

could provide an advisory role in the administration of Kashmir. In exchange, Pakistan would give up its claim on Kashmir. The Line of Control will become an international border, but it will be an open border and Kashmiris on both sides will have free mobility across the border.

In this way, both India and Pakistan would have a say in Kashmir. Instead of becoming a bone of contention, it could become a source of cooperation between two nuclear-armed neighbors. Cross-border cooperation will replace cross-border terrorism and extremists can be brought under control by joint India-Pakistan anti-terrorist operations.

**Mahmood Elahi**  
Ottawa, Ontario

## Conspiring

Salim Muwakkil is to be congratulated for his excellent article on the possibility of 9/11 conspiracies ("Nightmares of Reason," June 24). Such a thoughtful article is a welcome departure from the typical leftist dismissal of "conspiracy theory" as being irrelevant to the work for social and economic justice. Conspiracies do sometimes occur and, if exposed, can give us insight into understanding how the power elite manipulates events to suit their own selfish agenda.

We have much to learn about why our government intelligence agencies failed to protect us last September. If we are to have any pretense of being a functioning democracy, then we as citizens must insist on noth-

ing but a full, complete and honest independent investigation.

**Steve Jones**  
Landisville, Pennsylvania

## Blood Sports

Please allow me to respond to your Appall-O-Meter item about PETA's request that Austin High School in Minnesota send the Packers packing and pick a name for its sports teams that isn't associated with the suffering of animals raised and killed for food ("Packers vs. Pickers," June 24).

Schools that use the Packers moniker would never call themselves the Animal Killers, yet that is an accurate description of what packers—slaughterhouse workers—do.

Recent video exposés taken inside major packing plants show fully conscious animals being cut apart. Last year, the union of federal meat inspectors filed a petition with the USDA charging that production lines move too fast for workers to ensure that every animal is dead before she is skinned and dismembered.

**Paula Moore**  
People for the Ethical  
Treatment of Animals  
Norfolk, Virginia

## Correction

Due to an editing error, readers of "The Cuckoo's Nest" by Edit Penchina (July 8) are made to think that tardive dyskinesia is "rare but fatal." It is neither. The corrected article can be found on our Web site.

**Terry LaBan**





## Secret History?

Overseas documentary alleges war crimes in Afghanistan

By Adam Porter

Did Northern Alliance troops massacre 4,000 men in Afghanistan last November? Yes, according to a documentary recently completed by Irish filmmaker Jamie Doran. Witnesses in the film say the massacre was committed under the watch of U.S. soldiers.

*Massacre at Mazar* describes how approximately 7,500 men, allegedly Taliban troops, surrendered after the battle of Kunduz in November 2001 to the forces of Rashid Dostum, now deputy foreign minister of Afghanistan. The men were packed into sealed shipping containers and taken to Sheberghan prison, a jail then under U.S. control in the northwestern part of the country. Of the 7,500 captured, about 4,000 are now missing.

According to witnesses in the film, those 4,000 were executed by Northern Alliance troops as they were being transported or as they arrived at the prison. The men were then buried in the desert—with the knowledge and complicity of some 30 to 40 U.S. soldiers.

Sheer determination initially led Doran to Mazar and the massacre. There was intense fighting around Kunduz at the end of November, and Doran and his four-person film crew fought to reach the war's actual front line. "We had to make our point pretty forcefully," he says. After he was taken to false frontline trenches, Doran told his guides, "Look, this ... [is] a fucking tourist trap. Show me the real thing."

"They take us to another 'front line' where there is nothing going on," he says, "so I repeat myself. This is the fucking Hilton hotel." The Northern Alliance soldiers were sitting around smoking cigarettes. So they move us to another trench 300 meters ahead. That was the front line. We could see the Taliban troops."

"The rest of the journalists, the ones you saw on TV, well, they must have been—how can I say this—at a different front line."



Taliban prisoners huddle in a crowded jail. 4,000 Afghan troops may have died near a jail like this.

As Doran explains it, "Just under 8,000 men surrendered at Kunduz, [and] they were taken to Qala-I-Janghi, a fortress near Mazar. 300 were spirited away by Pakistani Intelligence services, the ISI; some [were] Uzbeks, some Tajiks. ... So, somewhere in the region of 7,223 men were still there. ... Basically, the Northern Alliance commanders in Qala-I-Janghi counted the men leaving [the fortress] and then counted the men arriving in Sheberghan. 7,223 left; around 3,000 arrived."

One witness, a truck driver, said he and others were forced to take hundreds of the captured men, many of whom were still alive, into the desert. "The captured men—some of whom were not fighters at all, but were rounded up because of their ethnicity—were packed into sea containers and stuck on the back of lorries," Doran says. "Many of them were left sealed in the heat. One of our witnesses said when they heard the cries of the men asking for air they just shot into the containers, live rounds. He admits doing it. Another witness, a taxi driver, stopped at a petrol station and said he smelt something awful. The guy from the petrol station said, 'Look at that container parked behind you.' Blood and goo were leaking out of the container."

Footage from the film showed large areas of compact red sand dotted with traces of bones, including jawbones, skulls, and pieces of army clothing.

The Pentagon denied the claims immediately after the documentary was shown in Europe in June. A spokesman said it had looked into allegations "a few months ago, when allegations first surfaced," and found no evidence of U.S. participation in or knowledge of the massacre.

Yet Doran's evidence is overwhelming. "The witnesses claimed that the 4,000 or so men were executed and buried in mass graves in a place called Dasht Leile near Qala-I-Janghi. We went and filmed there. They were also definite that around 30 to 40 American soldiers were there at the time."

Two groups, the United Nations and Physicians for Human Rights, have also reported finding a mass grave in the area. Both exhumed bodies from the site; forensic examination revealed all had died of suffocation. Both have recommended investigations.

The film has been shown around Europe. Rush footage was played to members of both the European Union and the United Nations, prompting immediate calls for a war crimes investigation. Now Channel 5, a national TV station, has agreed to show the film in the United Kingdom. Scotland's *Daily Herald* reported that members of the U.S. Congress and military were also going to view the film in late June. But the story, like the corpses of the men, remains buried, long after the atrocities took place.

Doran is most worried at the prospect of someone tampering with the graves. "Whilst the politicians are doing nothing, the crime scenes can be tampered with," he says. "The mass graves we filmed are just sitting there. The six witnesses we have, including guys who say they shot some of the men and the Northern Alliance commander and general who alerted us to the massacres, are all vulnerable." Some of the those witnesses have received death threats, he says.

"It is illegal under the Geneva Convention not to investigate allegations like this. Yet no one shows any sign of doing so. That is the real story." ■

## Northern Lights

### Canada ponders pot decriminalization as America fumes

By Nate Hendley

TORONTO—When Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario repealed their alcohol prohibition laws in the '20s, the change set off a booming cross-border trade in booze with the United States. Canadian bootleggers got rich, and American temperance advocates found themselves drowning in illegal spirits.

The United States ditched Prohibition in 1933—but now a new breed of American moralizers is again casting nervous eyes toward Canada. They're worried that just as Prohibition unraveled after Canada relaxed its laws, a trend toward marijuana law reform in Canada might just cause the War on Drugs to go up in smoke.

In 1998, Canada's ruling Liberal Party legalized commercial hemp farming. In

2001, they instituted a medical marijuana licensing system. Finally, in mid-July, Justice Minister Martin Cauchon announced he was giving serious consideration to the decriminalization of pot.

Under the plan, marijuana would remain illegal, but possession would become a relatively minor infraction. The roughly 30,000 Canadians charged each year for possession would face a ticket and a fine instead of jail-time and a record.

Cauchon's announcement came on the heels of a recent decision in Great Britain to make marijuana possession a "non-arrestable" offense.

American drug warriors are less than thrilled about these developments. In July, the Canadian *Globe and Mail* reported that Rep. Mark Souder (R-Indiana) had warned Canadian politicians during a meeting in Washington that further softening of Canada's drug laws could result in a border crackdown. Souder authored the federal law that strips financial aid from American students caught with even minute amounts of drugs.

Of course, American prohibitionists are already angry at the Canadian government for allowing the medical use of marijuana. Drug Czar John Walters told Canadian officials during a two-day conference in June that Canada should get tough on marijuana, instead of decriminalizing the drug or allowing people to use it for medicinal purposes.

In fact, federal U.S. bureaucrats tried hard to prevent the launch of a made-in-Canada cultivation program aimed at medicinal users. Last year, Health Canada (the agency that oversees the Canadian medical system) approached the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to purchase marijuana seeds. NIDA controlled the only legal supply of marijuana in North America, and Health Canada was eager to set up a pot farm to provide legal medicine for legitimate users.

After tough negotiations, NIDA nixed the deal, citing pressure from sources such as the DEA. In the end, Health Canada grew their pot with seeds that had been confiscated from criminals. The poor quality of the ensuing harvest became something of a national scandal earlier this year.

The source of the drug warriors' anger isn't hard to discern: While it's easy to ignore drug reform efforts in continental Europe, it's hard to cover up a decriminalization program happening next door. Should Canada decriminalize without any ill effects, American citizens might get the idea they could do the same thing.

In an interview published in the *National Post*, DEA head Asa Hutchinson was unusually blunt on this point. "We have great respect for Canada, and Britain as well, and if they start shifting policies with regards to marijuana it simply increases the rumblings in this country that we ought to reexamine our policy. It is a distraction from a firm policy on drug use."

Alan Young, a professor at Toronto's Osgoode Hall Law School and a long-time Drug War critic, isn't celebrating yet. This isn't the first time Canada has flirted with decriminalization. "I'm hearing this said for the 20th time in the last 30 years," he says. "The way I see it, there's no cause to celebrate until there's a piece of legislation which is about to receive Royal Assent [and become law in Canada]. Then I know something will happen." ■

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW





## Legal Eagles

Volunteer lawyers lead the fight against police torture

By Curtis Black

In 1998, a young mentally disabled man went to Chicago police after he witnessed a drive-by shooting in which a child was killed. Police held and interrogated him for two days. His family contacted First Defense Legal Aid, a free "early representation" service that uses volunteer attorneys. Attorney Kate Walz went to the station and found the young man dazed and confused. "They keep telling me I did it," he told her; police presented her with a written confession signed by her client. When Walz pointed out that the young man could neither read nor write, he was released, and his information later led to the arrest of another suspect.

For poor people, public defenders aren't assigned until after arraignment, and often that is too late. Worse, investigations and the experience of hundreds of people show that Chicago police may routinely ignore fundamental aspects of the U.S. justice system. Everyone has a theoretical right to an attorney while being questioned: Case law mandates that questioning should stop when an attorney arrives or when an individual asks to consult an attorney. "In Chicago, it's as if this law doesn't exist," says Jean Maclean Snyder from the MacArthur Justice Center at the University of Chicago Law School.

First Defense Legal Aid is trying to change all this. Founded in 1994 and partly modeled on the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem, the agency's 50 volunteer attorneys provide free phone consultations or station visits for anyone held at a police station. Thanks to an extensive public education program, First Defense receives about 2,000 calls a month.

Police have responded by finding a number of ways to block attorneys' access to clients, says Darrin Bowden, the group's executive director. Attorneys get the runaround when they begin calling stations to locate clients. Desk officers deny the presence of individuals who are actually in interrogation. Attorneys are kept waiting for hours while police continue questioning their clients alone. They are told their clients are there voluntarily as witnesses, not suspects—and are therefore not entitled to consult a lawyer—while those clients are held in locked interrogation rooms, handcuffed and denied outside contact. Such "witnesses" often end up being charged.

With the goal of establishing more regular procedures that ensure detainees' legal rights, First Defense has filed suit. The suit charges the city, State's Attorney Richard Devine, Chicago Police Superintendent Terry Hillard and other department personnel of blocking attorney's access to clients,

## IN SHORT

### Car Sharing Gains in Popularity

Popular in Europe since the '80s, car sharing programs are picking up speed in U.S. cities. San Francisco has seen a successful program open in the past year, and Chicago has just started a program, while Washington and Boston already have thriving car sharing networks with hundreds of members. According to the Car Sharing Network, car sharing is now available in more than three dozen North American cities.

The programs allow participants to reserve cars for their own personal use, often only an hour in advance and for as long as 24 hours at a time. The programs cover insurance, gas and other costs, while users pay hourly and monthly maintenance fees. Car sharing, enthusiasts say, cuts down on pollution and is usually much cheaper than owning a car, especially for occasional drivers. In addition, one shared car can replace as many as six individual car owners, according to the Car Sharing Network.

Participants are apparently enthusiastic about the program. In the San Francisco Bay Area, where 1,600 members share 60 cars with City Carshare, one group named their green Volkswagen Beetle "Pixy" and kept a notebook in the car to record their adventures. "It's not just a car," one of the first users had written, "... it's a community!"

City Carshare launched a partnership in July with Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), the San Francisco area's train system. Cars are now located outside BART stations in San Francisco and Oakland and are within walking distance of nine other stations. "The more we have a network," the group's deputy director said, "the more people realize it's more convenient, cheaper and a lot more fun than owning a car."

### The More the Merrier

BY KRISTIE REILLY

Planned Parenthood centers in Virginia have found a unique way to discourage anti-abortion protesters: It's called "Pledge-A-Picket." Volunteers pledge to give a certain amount—a quarter, dollar or some other amount—per picketer outside a clinic per day. The donations go to Planned Parenthood's Women In Need fund, which helps women who wouldn't otherwise be able to afford reproductive health care. The beauty of it, Virginia's *New River Free Press* reports, is that the greater the number of protesters, the more donations are generated: The program raised more than \$21,000 for the fund last year alone.

Protesters at Planned Parenthood clinics in Roanoke and Charlottesville target women seeking an abortion; at the Lynchburg branch, where abortion services are not offered, protesters target women searching out family planning care and contraception. Planned Parenthood of the Blue Ridge, which runs the locations in western Virginia, recorded 1,266 protesters at four clinic sites last year. "Our patients have an easier time tolerating the harassment when they know that without the protesters, they may not be able to afford the cost of abortion," said the group's president, David Nova. To help out, call (540) 562-2370, extension 201.



and in some cases using physical force to do so.

First Defense says its attorneys have been threatened with arrest for criminal trespass while trying to see clients, and have even been physically removed from police stations. When a police officer was shot and killed in June of last year, reportedly while conducting nighttime surveillance in a gang warfare zone, the agency received calls from the relatives of a dozen young people who were being held, including one 15-year-old and four 14-year-olds. First Defense Legal Director Sladjana Vuckovic was the first to arrive at the station—and was ordered to leave. When she refused, a detective grabbed her by the arm and forcibly escorted her down the stairs.

The station door was then locked, and First Defense attorneys waited there from 3 a.m. until 11 p.m. that night,

when their clients were released. The lawsuit charges assault and battery and unlawful use of force in this and three other instances in which lawyers were removed from police stations.

A steady stream of stories of false and coerced confessions in Chicago has highlighted the need for legal representation during questioning. In an investigation last year, the *Chicago Tribune* found 247 cases since 1991 in which police had obtained confessions that failed to stand up in court. In one case, a 15-year-old under intense questioning confessed to stabbing a woman to death. He was locked up for over a year and prosecuted—unsuccessfully, since the autopsy had found no stab wounds.

In April, a Cook County criminal judge appointed a special prosecutor to investigate charges of torture and subsequent cover-ups against Chicago police, in

response to a petition by 13 civil rights groups, including Citizen's Alert of Chicago, Amnesty International and the Cook County Bar Association. It is the first criminal investigation into charges of torture by Chicago police in decades.

In 1999, police began to videotape murder confessions, but Bowden says that's not enough—interrogations need to be taped too. The first murder suspect to give a videotaped confession in Chicago recently went on trial. He testified that he was kicked, choked, kneed in the groin and threatened with death during his four-and-a-half-day interrogation. He also testified that when he gave a detective his lawyer's business card, the detective tore it up. Says Bowden, "The tapes don't show that the alleged confession may have come in the seventieth hour, and all that went on in that time." ■

## ((( (( ( ( ( ( ( APPALL-O-METER ) ) ) ) ) ) )

### Better Fighting Thru Chemistry **8.8**

*Counterpunch* reports that Pentagon honchos are forging ahead with research into the possibilities of "weaponizing" a broad range of drugs. The Sunshine Project, a watchdog group, has obtained a sensitive Pentagon document detailing the state of the art of psychopharmacological warfare. The tools of the trade include various opiates, antidepressants such as Prozac and Zoloft, so-called club drugs such as ecstasy and "Special K," and "date rape" drugs such as rohypnol ("roofies"). In the report, researchers from the Pentagon's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate (JNLWD), describe "the development and use" of such drug weapons as "achievable and desirable."

You may well wonder whether weaponized drugs aren't a humane step forward in the art of war. After all, wouldn't collateral victims the world over rather our fighting boys merely

turned them on than blow them to smithereens? And is there a better way to Americanize the adversary Other than to give him our coke and our valium, our Prozac and our E?

Problem is, pharmacological weapons violate at least two biological- and chemical- weapons conventions that the United States is party to. If you wonder why, consider the drug Precedex, a commonly used sedative in Intensive Care Units. A useful side effect, the Pentagon paper reports with approval, makes subjects more acutely sensitive to electric shock.

### The Slacker Dictator **1.4**

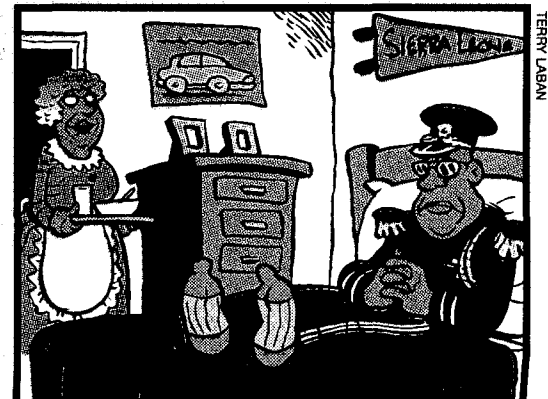
Recent times have not been good to A-list dictators. Blue-chip strongmen have been deposed, hauled before tribunals, and confined to house arrest by the dozen. But a special kind of ignominy has been reserved for Valentine Strasser. He once wielded the

rod of state in Sierra Leone; now he lives in his old room at home.

Ten years ago, at the tender age of 25, Strasser led a bunch of Gen-X officers in a junta that controlled the country for four years, before he in turn was overthrown in 1996. He went into exile in England, briefly trying law school in Coventry before dropping out and drifting to London. Deported back to Sierra Leone, Strasser enjoys the life of a layabout on the outskirts of Freetown, the capital city, drinking immoderately, ducking old enemies, and remembering old times. "I'm basically living off my mother now," the ex-dictator told The Associated Press. "She's been very supportive."

### Tube of Plenty **5.2**

Television appears to deliver a salutary, if imaginary, benefit to heavy viewers: They believe they have well-developed social lives and lots of friends. A study of American TV watchers found that female sitcom fans and male news buffs expressed a level of satisfaction with their social lives similar to nonwatchers with more real-life buddies. The study, published in Britain's *New Scientist*, explained that the brain's mechanism for recognizing friends counts any face it sees regularly as a actual friend.





## Tokyo Drifters

### Japan faces growing homelessness

By Megan Rowling

It's a hot, humid Sunday afternoon in Sanya, northeast Tokyo. Homeless men drape the windswept pavements, some slugging from bottles of rice wine. Inside the shopping arcade, where the shutters are mostly down, others lie asleep on makeshift beds of piled-up cardboard boxes. Here is the hidden underbelly of this flashy city, this consumer heaven. Here are the consequences of what has been dubbed Japan's "golden recession"—a phrase that rings hollow on these streets paved with anything but gold.

It wasn't always like this. During the bubble economy of the '80s, when Japan's stock market and real estate prices soared, laborers flocked to the area, picking up jobs on a day-by-day basis. The construction industry was booming, and there was money to be made. But since the bubble burst in 1989, Japan has been through three recessions. With each, day laboring and other informal work has become harder to find. Unemployment has jumped, and homelessness has exploded. The government now puts the number of homeless at 24,000; activists say it's at least 30,000.

Mitsuo Nakamura of the Sanya Welfare Center for Day Laborers' Association explains that unemployment is the cause of some 80 percent of homelessness in Japan. "We used to have a network for providing jobs here," he says, "but as the work got less, that community has broken down." With investors and politicians both at home and abroad pressuring Japanese companies to restructure, the country's jobless—and homeless—totals are expected to continue to rise.

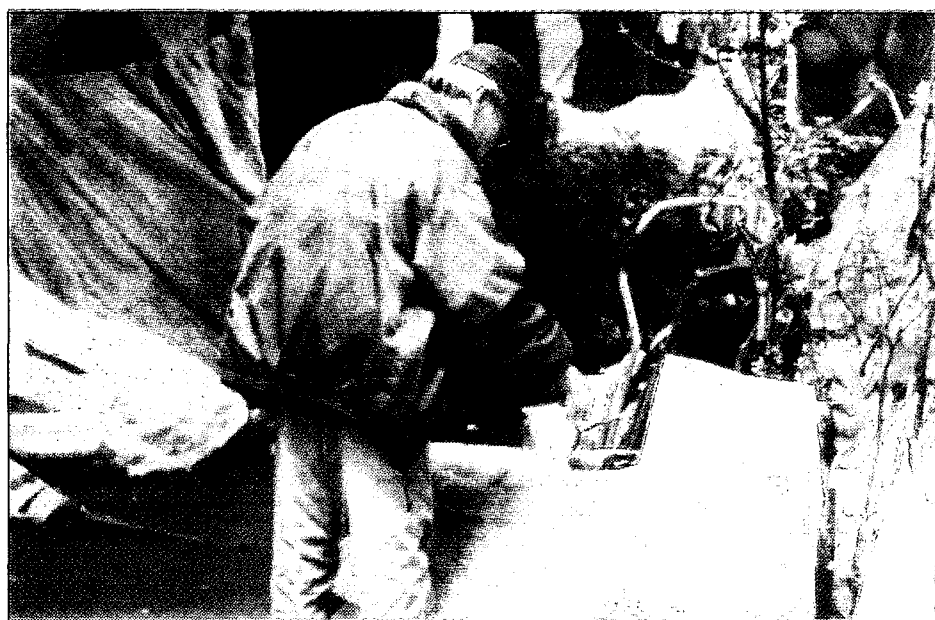
It's men in their fifties who suffer most from the erosion of Japan's lifetime employment system. As companies cut payrolls, they are being laid off or forced to retire early, with poor prospects of finding work elsewhere. And they are being let down by Japan's social welfare system, which was never designed to support large numbers of jobless, especially in this age group.

In the past, there was simply no need for

extensive unemployment benefits. So limited benefits are paid only for a period of 90 to 300 days, depending on how long the recipient has worked previously. In addition, state pensions are paid only after 65, leaving many who can't find a new job unable to afford accommodation. The fear now is that the increasingly insecure job market will result in more homeless women and young people—a rarity at present.

In a street behind the Sanya Laborers' Welfare Hall, about 30 people haul huge pots of food onto makeshift fires. It is stifling work, but with some 1,700 meals to

ever to tackle homelessness directly. On that day, some 150 homeless and activists gathered at the Parliament building in Tokyo to celebrate the passage of the "Homeless Self-Help Bill." The legislation stipulates that national and local governments must support those who wish to find work and a place to live. It approves funding for governmental and non-governmental organizations working with the homeless, and recommends that the expertise of such public organizations be incorporated into government policy. Thanks to intense lobbying by activists,



A homeless man checks his belongings in front of his small tent in a Tokyo park.

be prepared, no one's complaining. Every Sunday, trade union members and volunteers from several non-profit organizations spend several hours cooking food for Tokyo's homeless. They distribute it in Sanya and parks around the city. It's not much: just a handful of rice mixed with vegetables. But in Shinjuku Central Park, 500 people line up for their share, as similar initiatives remain few.

Japan has long been criticized for its tardy and inadequate response to the growing problem of homelessness. In the '90s, it adopted a confrontational approach, evicting the homeless from their temporary dwellings around the city. But this treatment met with resistance from activists, and, after years of fighting, they achieved a victory on July 31, when the government passed a new piece of legislation—the first

the law also states that the human rights of homeless people must be respected—crucial because it also provides for steps to allow "appropriate use" of public places, which suggests homeless people may be cleared out of areas like public parks.

Over the past few years, miniature villages of makeshift dwellings have sprung up in public areas all over Japan's major cities. Most are built from blue plastic sheets hung over a basic wooden or cardboard frame and range in size from a small tent to a garden shed. Some inhabitants have considerable amounts of furniture and even generators to power electrical equipment. Suzuko Yasue, director of the Tokyo-based Resource Center for Homeless Human Rights, estimates that around 40 percent of Japan's homeless live in such "blue-sheet houses," allowing them a better standard of

SUSUMU TAKAHASHI / REUTERS

living than those who sleep on the streets.

Due to a lack of emergency shelters, most local governments have come to an uneasy truce with these mushrooming homeless communities. The result is what Charles McJilton, director of Foodbank Japan and a former blue-sheet house dweller, describes as a "bureaucratic ballet." Down on the banks of the Sumida River, where more than 1,000 of these homes are located, it's a monthly ritual. On a fixed date, everyone dismantles their houses and moves them to the top of the embankment, leaving only

piles of garbage. A group of council workers then arrives to clear away the rubbish and take photographs showing that there are, in fact, no temporary dwellings. Ten minutes after they've gone, people move back in. It may be a farce, but for now there is no real alternative for either local governments or the homeless.

The only real solution, says Nakamura of the Sanya Laborers' Association, is to provide regular work for the homeless. "What they need is not 'help,' but the tools to do something to make their own lives better,

and that includes jobs," he says.

Currently, there are very few options. Some manage to scrape together a few dollars a day by collecting aluminum cans for recycling. But this is a far cry from the manufacturing or construction jobs many held before Japan's industrial economy started to "hollow out," a phrase used to describe the foreign outsourcing of workers—while managers remained in the country. "We must change the situation," warns Nakamura, "because if we don't, this problem is only going to get worse." ■

## PERSON

BY ELIZABETH WEILL-GREENBERG

# We Become What We Hate

I could have cheerfully killed someone myself when I found out [my daughter] was dead," says Anne Coleman. Her daughter was murdered while driving through Los Angeles in 1985, and the case remains unsolved. "But that doesn't mean I wanted the death penalty. I was opposed to the death penalty, and I always had been."

Coleman travels on the "Journey of Hope ... From Violence to Healing," a national public education speaking tour led by people who have lost a loved one to murder and oppose the death penalty. Some participants, like Coleman, have forgiven their loved ones' killers, while others share the anger they still feel.

"Forgiving the person who killed Frances has given me peace of mind," Coleman confesses. "Hate can literally destroy you." After her daughter's death, she and the mother of a Death Row inmate founded another organization, Because Love Allows Compassion, that gives support and advice to families of Death Row inmates and to murder victims' families.

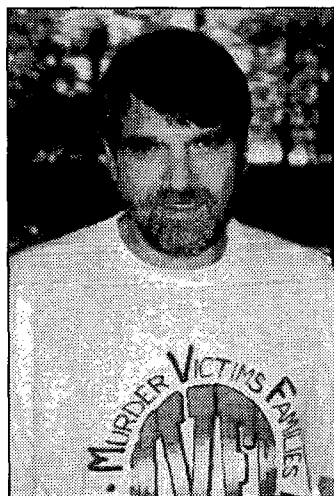
Bill Pelke, co-founder of Journey of Hope, lost his grandmother to a brutal murder; she was stabbed and killed by four ninth-grade girls she invited into her home after they knocked on her door and

inquired about the Bible lessons she taught. At first, Pelke supported one of the girls, Paula Cooper, receiving a death sentence. "I was there at the courtroom the day she was sentenced to death, and that was fine with me," he admits.

But over time he grew to oppose it. Several months after Cooper's sentencing, while at work as a crane operator, Pelke experienced a "moment of enlightenment": "I begged God to please give me love and compassion for Paula Cooper on behalf of my grandmother. I realized I no longer wanted this girl to die." He began to correspond with her and worked for years to overturn her sentencing, an effort that was eventually successful.

Death penalty opponents are often accused of thinking only of perpetrators' needs, and never of victims' needs. Victims' rights are narrowly defined in terms of retribution and the alleged closure state-sponsored vengeance will bring. The Journey of Hope shares the narratives of those who can answer, from horrific personal experience, the accusation that they'd feel differently if it happened to them.

"When we do talk to murder victim family members that don't agree with how we feel, we know where they're coming from ... pain, [and] a



Bill Pelke

desire for revenge," Pelke says. "By sharing our stories, people can be very fully aware they support people on both sides of the issue—people on Death Row, Death Row families and the victims' families."

Journey of Hope, founded in 1993, has travelled to countless schools, community centers and houses of worship throughout the United States. The group hosts an annual two-week public education event and conducts year-round tours here and in other countries, drawing both those who oppose the death penalty and those who support it. The group began as a

project of Murder Victims Families for Reconciliation, a victims' advocacy group that opposes capital punishment. After speaking to thousands of people, Journey of Hope became its own organization in 1997.

The speakers' stories contrast starkly with the myths often used to support the death penalty, such as its perceived cathartic power for victims. "The death penalty definitely does not bring closure," Coleman says. After an execution, many victims are left with the same gnawing pain and anger they hoped the execution would ease.

"Unfortunately, the prosecutors don't have a desire to see the victims heal," Pelke says, echoing Coleman. "They want to keep the victim angry and go to the courtroom and let the jury see the tears." The lengthy appeals that inevitably follow a death sentence force a grieving family to revisit the murder—"to relive it and relive it and relive it," Pelke says. "It's like ... opening the wound again."

"The death penalty has absolutely nothing to do with healing. [It] just continues that cycle of violence and creates more murder victim family members," Pelke says. "We become what we hate. We become killers." ■

CHRIS HONDROS / GETTY



# War on the CEOs

By **Ana Marie Cox**

**S**top me if you've heard this one before: Republicans have criticized Democrats about an issue that's "too serious a matter" (said one Florida GOP official) to be "playing politics" (said Tom DeLay). DeLay went on to say that it was "unconscionable" for the opposition to take and gain politically while "people are hurting."

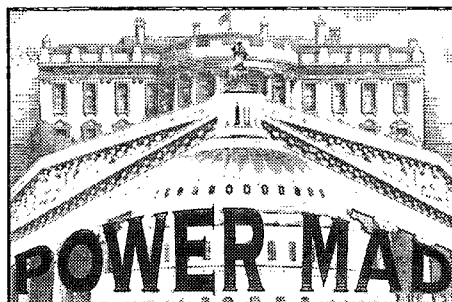
"This is not about our politics," Dick Arney sputtered on *Meet the Press*. "Anybody that makes this about their politics does the nation and themselves, personally, a disservice." For his part, President Bush said that the crisis at hand had made Americans more thoughtful: "I believe people have taken a step back and asked, 'What's important in life?' You know, the bottom line and this corporate America stuff—is that important? Or is serving your neighbor, loving your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself?"

It all sounds incredibly familiar, but this time the GOP isn't playing the national unity card to grease the wheels of a war. No, this jingoistic rhetoric has been run up the flagpole in the hopes we'll all be so busy saluting that we won't too closely analyze the problem itself. Namely, rampant corporate corruption and an economic downturn that threatens both working-class Americans and the president's poll numbers.

Republicans, having noted how well they fared—and how quiet the Democrats became—when Bush launched the war on terror, helpfully have recast the economy's troubles into a similarly simplistic battle of Good vs. Evil. Call it the war on CEOs.

Of course, this war hardly resembles the Battle in Seattle—no giant puppets, for instance. It's also quite unlike the war on

terrorism, which so quickly sparked widespread suspicion of all Muslims. The administration's new war is a ruthlessly specific campaign that has in its sights only the few who—as Bush put it—"created the stains that we must deal with." The Democrats claim the stain is widespread. Nonsense, say the Republicans: You can't blame all of the followers of the free market faith for the actions of a hand-



ful of zealots. Next thing you know, DeLay will be accusing Dick Gephardt of being in favor of "economic profiling."

But there are obvious ironies, and then there are obvious ironies. This blustering about the Democrats' supposed antipathy to big business assumes, for instance, that Gephardt means it when he says that deregulation has had a "destructive impact on our laws and our economic health." This is, of course, true, but it appears to be a truth that Gephardt can easily forget when it becomes necessary for him to do so: In his quest for the center-left brass ring, Gephardt has backed away from the positions that once distinguished him from the new Democrat drones around him, flip-flopping on everything from universal health care to research tax credits for businesses.

And of course it's amusing to see these presidential hopefuls attempt to tar the Republicans with the same brush that the

New Democrats have used to paint their campaign slogans for the past decade. Even as John Edwards accused Bush of seeing "through the eyes of the CEOs" and not "ordinary Americans," Senate leader Tom Daschle was squashing an amendment to count stock options as expenses, apparently at the behest of venture capitalist John Doerr, according to *The New Republic*.

The Republicans urge the Democrats to back away from tough anti-corporate talk because, as one GOP national committee member put it, "The investor class includes everyone now." At the same time, pseudo-populists such as Edwards equate those "ordinary Americans" with "ordinary investors." Yet only 19.2 percent of Americans own stock directly; half own stock either directly or through a mutual fund. Almost all of those not owning stock earn less than \$50,000 a year. This is the group, let's face it, who will suffer the most in any economic down-turn. Thousands may have lost their retirement savings, but thousands more have no savings to lose.

Ignoring these millions of Americans allows both parties to turn the opportunity for true corporate change that's come with the Wall Street scandals (tying executive salaries to those of frontline workers, maybe) into a narrow debate about accounting procedures. But protecting "ordinary investors" leaves a greater number unprotected.

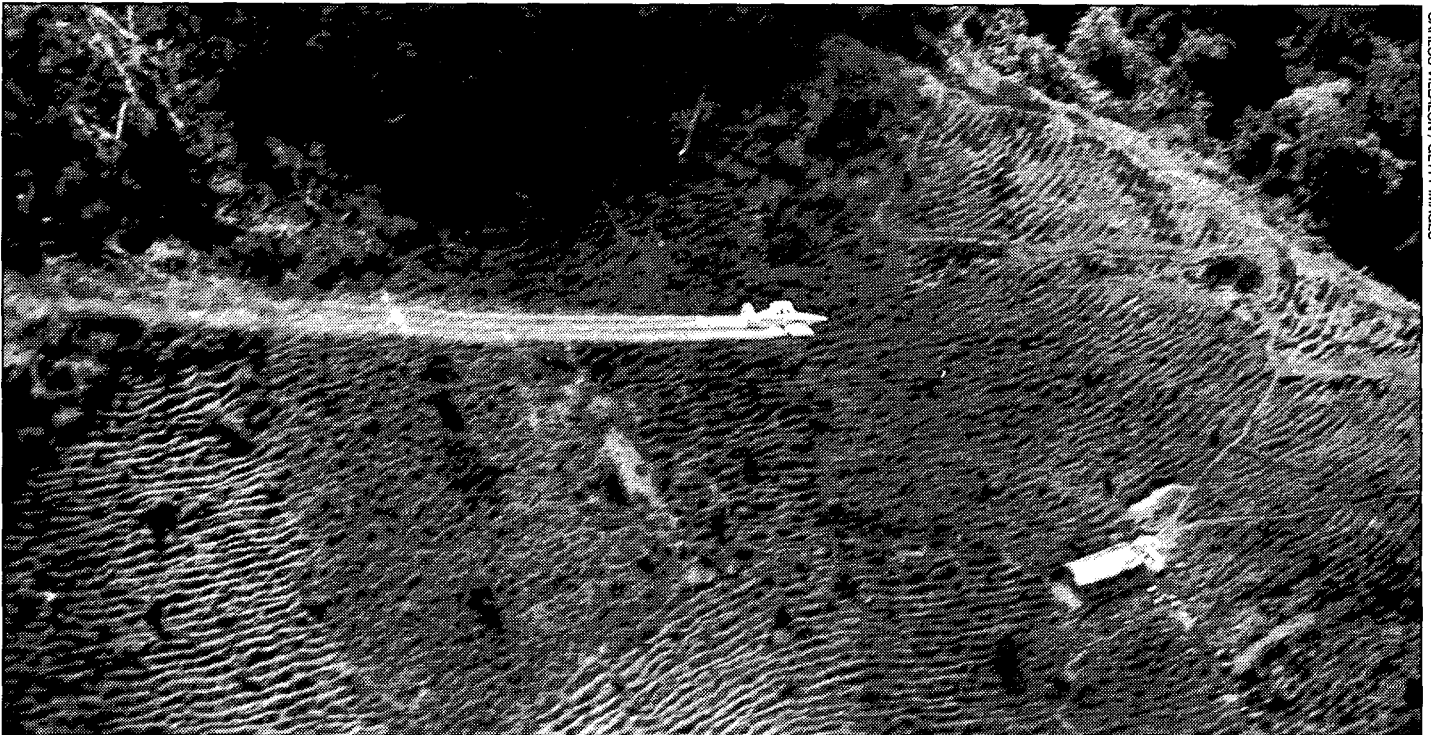
The problem with the Republicans' charge of "playing politics," then, isn't that the Democrats have been differentiating themselves from their opponents—it's that they haven't. And the problem with using the rhetoric of war to talk about CEOs isn't that we shouldn't be united against a common enemy. It's that we aren't. ■

	<p><b>APPEAL TO REASON</b>  <b>25 Years In These Times</b>          Edited by <b>Craig Aaron</b>          Introduction by <b>ROBERT W. MCCHESENEY</b>          Foreword by <b>JAMES WEINSTEIN</b>          416 pages / \$19.95 paperback          ISBN: 1-58322-275-8</p>	<p><b>SEVEN STORIES</b>  <b>Seven Stories Press</b>          140 Watts Street          New York, NY 10013  <a href="http://www.sevenstories.com">www.sevenstories.com</a>          (800) 596-7437</p>
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# War or Peace?

Colombia's new president  
must choose between  
Washington and his own people.

By Ana Carrigan



CARLOS VILLALON / GETTY IMAGES

A Dyncorp airplane sprays herbicide on poppy fields that were once controlled by Colombian rebels.

**O**n the night of May 26, when Alvaro Uribe Velez won the Colombian presidential race in a landslide, his victory was perceived in Bogota and Washington as a resounding mandate from Colombian voters for escalating the war against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC).

Uribe, who takes office on August 7, campaigned on a pledge to re-establish the government's authority throughout Colombia. He proposes to raise taxes to triple defense spending, double the number of professional soldiers and police, give the army new powers to carry out preventive detentions and searches, and create a million-man civilian intelligence militia to gather information on guerrillas and their supporters.

After years of frustration with President Andres Pastrana's failed peace process, Uribe's victory is precisely what the Bush administration has been waiting for to pursue its twin obsessions—drugs and terrorists—in Colombia. The American ambassador arrived at the candidate's headquarters to assure him of Washington's support even before he was declared the winner. Otto Reich, the undersecretary of state for Latin America, flew to Bogota five days later to meet Uribe and discuss his requests for increased military aid and the removal of U.S. restrictions on the use of counter-narcotics helicopters and American-trained battalions against the guerrillas.

When asked whether the nature of American aid to Colombia was about to change “from counter-narcotics to some kind of



counter-insurgency role,” Reich’s answer encapsulated the denial of political reality that has become routine in Washington’s relations with Latin America. “We’re not going to engage in counter-insurgency in Colombia,” he said, “because there is no counter-insurgency in Colombia. What you have is three terrorist groups that operate as organized-crime families, except they wear combat fatigues and they have a lot of people and some very high-powered weapons. ... These are not insurgents. These are criminals. These are terrorists. ... and Colombia is a democratic country, freely elected. It’s a friend, and we’re going to support them.”

Since then, Reich has continued raising the stakes for deepening America’s military involvement. In a recent *Washington Times* column he claimed that “Our values, our security, and the future of our hemisphere are tied to Colombia’s victory in its war against terror.” On July 23, after only an hour’s debate, Congress duly passed the administration’s \$28.9 billion anti-terrorism package that includes \$500,000 to fight terrorism in Colombia, provides funds to create and equip a new Colombian army brigade to protect Occidental’s oil pipeline from guerrilla attacks, and lifts all restrictions on military aid. Meanwhile the U.S. Embassy in Bogota has announced the resumption of one of the chief catalysts of Colombian rebellion: The spray planes of America’s drug eradication program are once again flying over the plots of tens of thousands of small farmers, fumigating everything that grows with a new, stronger version of the controversial chemical Roundup.

“Plan Colombia”—re-Christened the Andean Regional Initiative—has indeed been revealed as the capacious Trojan horse for American counter-insurgency intervention in the Andes that critics always predicted. Already Colombia’s war has spilled across the borders of Ecuador and Venezuela. More than 100 civilians have been killed recently in the Ecuadorian town of Lago Agrio, since Colombian guerrillas and paramilitaries arrived to establish rival camps. “If Colombia is going to become another Vietnam, we don’t want Ecuador to be the next Cambodia,” the Ecuadorian foreign minister recently told the *Los Angeles Times*.

Yet while the Bush administration has been escalating Washington’s involvement in Colombia’s war, in Bogota a different interpretation of Uribe’s electoral mandate has emerged. On election night, nothing in Uribe’s victory speech resonated so powerfully across Colombia as his surprise vow to seek U.N. mediation to begin a fresh round of negotiations with the guerrillas and the paramilitaries.

Three weeks later, in the first post-electoral test of public attitudes on the issues of war and peace, a poll conducted in Colombia’s five largest cities by Georgetown University and a German NGO,



CARLOS VILLALON / GETTY

Alvaro Uribe Velez’s election victory is just what Washington has been waiting for.

Outside the bullet-proof windows of their SUVs, outside the gated communities where wealthy Colombians live under siege, the conditions for a violent social insurrection are brewing.

chalked up another unexpected result: 65 percent of those consulted wanted Uribe to seek a negotiated end to the conflict; 77 percent supported his decision to request U.N. mediation; only 14 percent wanted international military aid; and 26 percent thought the best way the international community could advance a future peace process was by providing help to promote human rights.

Ever since, the pressure on Uribe to reinstate talks with the guerrillas, and include the right-wing paramilitaries in negotiations to end the conflict, has increased steadily, with calls from the Catholic Church, a consortium of regional governors and mayors, and an elite group of lobbyists campaigning for the release of high-profile political hostages held by the guerrillas, including former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt.

Uribe is the first independent ever elected to the Colombian presidency. Yet he also owes a debt to the Colombian far right for their support. The extreme right is an autonomous, well-organized minority, united behind a clearly defined political agenda. They want Uribe to put the country on a war footing and expect him to carry out a reform of the justice system that will tame the independence of the Constitutional Court, abolish the office of the public ombudsman—the last resort for human rights protections—and amend the constitution so he can declare a state of emergency and give army commanders a free hand to deal with the war.

If Uribe’s supporters, who promote their extremist views in the opinion pages, are to be believed, they also expect him to use these new judicial powers to dispatch the army on a witch hunt to root out members of a Colombian “fifth column”: dissident intellectuals, labor leaders, priests, judges, human rights defenders, ecologists and assorted NGOs, whom they accuse of belonging to a new international communist conspiracy.

But whatever the ambitions of the fundamentalists, the majority of Uribe’s voters were ordinary citizens, desperate for capable new leadership. They are hoping Uribe can fulfill his

promises to return security to their streets and their farms, fight endemic corruption and political patronage, woo back investment and jobs to the broken economy, and increase social spending to reduce the extreme poverty that is at the root of the exponential growth of the guerrilla and paramilitary armies.

Since President Pastrana broke off the peace talks with the FARC leaders last February, the guerrillas have launched three major coordinated offensives that have substantially altered the military balance of power. In early June, borrowing a strategy used to devastating effect by the Vietcong, the FARC started a campaign of death threats and ultimatums, aimed at driving elected mayors and municipal judges from their posts.

Within a few weeks, they had erased all traces of government authority from 35 municipalities in 24 of the nation's 32 states. A further 200 mayors had fled their town halls and were attempting to administer by remote control from military barracks and regional capitals. Hundreds more—including the mayor of Cali, one of the country's largest cities—are trying to hold out despite being targets.

The outgoing Pastrana government has been helpless to counter this threat. "If the situation was not so serious, the minister of the interior's recommendations would make us laugh," responded a regional newspaper to the offer of bodyguards, flak jackets and special credit arrangements so that threatened mayors could buy themselves guns for self-defense.

The FARC, meanwhile is planning the next stage of their strategy to impose an alternative local government, based on the formation of "revolutionary civilian councils"—which would function under the direction of community leaders, forced to carry out FARC "laws" at gunpoint.

Now is this the only crisis confronting Uribe. Colombia is sitting on a social and economic powder keg. Public debt at close to 54 percent of GNP has brought the threat of an Argentina-style collapse frighteningly close. Beyond the bullet-proof windows of their SUVs, outside the gated communities where wealthy Colombians live under siege, the conditions for a violent social insurrection are brewing. Sixty-four percent of Colombians—27 million people—live below the poverty line (four years ago, that figure was 49 percent; in 1982, it was 39 percent); 9.6 million of them are destitute; one in five children in rural Colombia is undernourished; and 2 million people have been displaced by the war. (According to U.N. figures, 80 percent of this displaced population suffers from hunger.)

As Uribe faces the gargantuan task of salvaging a viable future for his country out of the wreck he has inherited, one thing is crystal clear: If the war continues, the next phase will not only destroy what is left of Colombia's democracy; it will eliminate every vestige of rural community life and culture. The FARC's "revolutionary civilian councils" are the mirror image of Alvaro Uribe's own proposal for a million-man civilian intelligence militia. For the first time in the 40-year saga of this war, these two repugnant projects will force civilians to participate in a war that has nothing to do with them.

Like every other Colombian president of the past 20 years, Uribe has a choice. He can follow Washington's lead into a wider war; or he can provide independent leadership, and with the mediation of the United Nations and the support of Europe and his closest Latin neighbors, he can revive the political route to a lasting negotiated peace. If he chooses the path to war, it won't be long before the embers of rebellion, already smoldering in Bolivia, Venezuela and Peru, flare up and set the entire region aflame. ■



PHOTOS: (CAMERAMAN) SIMIN FARKHONDEH, (TRALLY) GARY SCHUCHET

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# CHEAP HOTELS

## LABOR TAKES ON CHICAGO'S HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

BY DAVID MOBERG

### CHICAGO

**J**anja Subasic, a 38-year old immigrant from Bosnia, cleans rooms for \$8.83 an hour at the Sheraton Chicago, where a single room can cost nearly \$400 a night. She pays \$85 a month for health insurance for her children. If Subasic did the same job in New York, she would earn \$18.15 an hour and have free family health insurance. "We don't have nothing," she says. "We don't have personal days. We need more vacation. We need more money. We are ready for strike."

It may take a strike for 7,000 Chicago-area hotel workers to make such gains when their contract expires at the end of August. For more than a year, the union has been working hard to organize its members and community supporters for a strike, if a spirited threat alone doesn't persuade employers to cough up what Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) Local 1 President Henry Tamarin calls the "giant, giant money" needed to bring the Chicago contract closer to national standards.

The current negotiations are the culmination of more than two years of work that began in December 1999, when Local 1 was put into trusteeship because of local leaders' gross mismanagement. But it also reflects HERE's effort to adopt a national and even international strategy, as global corporate giants consolidate the union's core industries—hotels, gaming and food preparation.

With by far the weakest big city contract in what may be the second most lucrative hotel market in the country, "The negotiations in Chicago are fundamental to the future of the union," says HERE President John Wilhelm, who held the union's executive board meeting in Chicago in July to underscore the need for national support. "We have a local that had not only become weak but had become corrupt," he says. "From the point of view of restoring the faith of our members in the union, but also for making progress from the international point of view, it's fundamentally important to put Chicago hotel workers on a competitive plane."

**T**he Chicago local has been following a strategy HERE developed over the years in several key cities, such as San Francisco and Las Vegas, but it also draws on labor traditions of grass-roots mobilization and tactics currently used by other effective unions. In the HERE model, the union systematically establishes workplace committees and nurtures rank-and-file leaders to educate and mobilize members for collective actions, ranging from wearing union buttons to protests on the

job. The union also builds support from community groups, religious institutions and politicians in advance of confrontations with employers. And it deploys its savvy research staff to find employers' vulnerable pressure points.

In other words, HERE is trying to demonstrate that hotel managers are confronting the power of not just one local but the entire international union. Last fall local union leaders from around the country joined Boston's local in opening contract negotiations. Eventually, the union hopes to have contracts expire in the same year around the country, but that seems a remote goal.

In Chicago, HERE is supporting Local 1 financially—paying salaries of many staff, pledging \$100 a week in strike pay and loaning the local enough to pay an additional \$100 a week. In addition, beyond organizing solidarity demonstrations at hotels around the country, the union could "work to rule" in other cities, that is, pressure management by inflexibly following contractual rules. "We might take a look at whether we're fully enforcing the contract in every city," says Wilhelm. "We can do a lot of things like that. We're in the process of experimentation."

This past year has been rough for the hotel industry; the effects of a national economic downturn were worsened by travel disruption after the September 11 attacks. Despite this, by demonstrating to employers that the union was ready to wage a bruising battle, HERE has been able in recent months to score victories without strikes in key cities.

Last September, the Boston local won a strong new contract, in which hotel chains pledged to be neutral during unionization efforts and to recognize the union if a majority of workers signed union cards at all new hotels in the area. Previously the union had won such rights only in New York and Las Vegas; it is now seeking the same commitment in Chicago. Such neutrality and card-check agreements have helped organized labor avoid typical anti-union tactics and delays in union representation elections conducted by the National Labor Relations Board—but Rep. Charles Norwood (R-Georgia) is introducing legislation that would prohibit union recognition through card checks.

In late May and early June, the 45,000-member Las Vegas local won a new contract that will preserve its threatened health insurance fund in the first year, provide substantial monetary increases in subsequent years and strengthen work rules for over-worked room cleaners. After more than 20,000 union members

attended a rally and voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike, and other workers held protests at their hotels or on the job, the major casino chains settled without a strike.

Last summer, Tamarin, who had been brought in from New York to clean up the Chicago local, was elected president of Local 1. Immediately, he began—with a staff that was mostly new and trained in other locals—to resolve the fractious bitterness of the Local 1 presidential election and build toward the contract fight. Although hotels in Chicago did not suffer as deeply as those in many cities after September 11, the local has faced a range of frustrations. Riverboat casino owners resisted settling contracts. The airline catering business was in an economic crisis. A group of workers at the United Center Stadium petitioned to decertify the union. Through it all, the staff of the 14,000-member local kept its focus on the upcoming negotiations with the Hotel Employers Labor Relations Association (HELRA).

The local has been soliciting members for contract suggestions, polling members and assembling a large negotiating committee that reflects the local's diversity of hotels, occupations and ethnic groups. The union is demanding "New York pay," free family health insurance, job security (ending subcontracting and winning neutrality and card-check at new hotels), paid sick days and stronger contract language on workloads and job rights.

Winning a hefty new contract is essential for hotel workers, and for putting the union in a better position to improve conditions for local members who work for casinos, restaurants or caterers. Equally important, the union needed a good contract to jumpstart a major organizing drive planned for the fall. The old union leadership had organized only one of the 14 hotels that have opened in Chicago since 1997, and had let union representation drop from 82 percent of hotel workers to 62 percent.

Union staff picked leaders in different hotel departments who could educate fellow workers and recruit them for actions such as leafletting Chicago's hotel and shopping districts. The goal has been to inform the public and non-union hotel workers about Local 1's objectives. It also educates union members, who often were not aware of how much better contracts are in other cities. With each new action, even in wintry months, more members became involved in union activity. By late spring, Local 1 had developed an internal hotel committee of more than 350 leaders, although it hopes to have 700 on its contract committee before the strike deadline of August 31.

In a city with no recent history of hotel worker strikes or even member mobilization, few workers had ever handed out a leaflet, let alone taken more militant steps. But by early summer, Chicago's hotel workers were skirmishing on the job. With help from a sympathetic priest, they successfully protested and

restored the job of a key union leader at the important Hyatt Regency Hotel. In order to involve the large number of new immigrants, especially in the lower-paid, non-tipped jobs, the union regularly translated all meetings into Spanish and some meetings into Bosnian and Chinese.

By joining in solidarity actions over the past year, HERE also forged ties with groups such as Jobs with Justice and the Chicago Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice. Local 1 developed links with churches and community groups as well as politicians: Mayor Richard Daley, powerful alderman Ed Burke and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Rod Blagojevich all support the union's contract goals. In late July, the local opened a food warehouse and strike kitchen. As part of the union's "Hungry for Justice" campaign, it will provide food to strikers on the picket line and their families at home. By soliciting food contributions at churches and politicians' offices, the union makes it clear to its members that they won't be starved out if there's a strike. Equally important, it involves the larger community in the hotel workers' struggle. The union will also step up pressure by notifying travel agents nationwide about the results of the strike authorization vote on August 12.



Although workers signal their chief demand by wearing buttons that read "I ♥ New York Pay," Tamarin warns that they should not expect to match New York immediately. "What we are

fighting for is giant, an out-of-the-box settlement no matter how you define the box," Tamarin told a June membership meeting. "People say they'll give us the money because they know they're underpaying, because we work hard, because we're nice people. Bullshit. They'll give us money because we make them. They've been robbing us for years. You say the union has changed, but they don't know that."

Tamarin wanted to start talks early, but HELRA delayed the first negotiations until August 5, making it difficult to settle so many major issues before August 31, especially since corporate executives—not local management—will call the shots. Tamarin hopes that a turnout of thousands of members for the strike authorization vote rally and for a march down Michigan Avenue near the end of August will convince employers that the strike threat is real, that the union has changed, and that they should pay what they do in other cities rather than suffer disruption of the coming lucrative convention season.

What is crucial is that members of Local 1 think that the union has changed from its bad old days—and that, in many ways, they have as well. As Janja Subasic, who uses her newly developing English skills to bring the union message to fellow Bosnians, says, "I feel the union has changed—for better job."

It's the willingness of workers to act on those hopes that will shape the fate of hotel workers in Chicago and elsewhere. ■



# BAD TO WORSE

Welfare reform is up for reauthorization, but it's only going to get meaner

By Neil deMause

**W**hat a difference a year makes. Last winter, hopes were running high that "welfare reform" was itself ripe for reform. The plunging economy was revealing the shallowness of the much-ballyhooed success of the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act—after being slashed by 60 percent, welfare rolls began to rise again late last year—and while more women were working, child poverty rates remained stubbornly high.

With the welfare law due for reauthorization in October this year, Rep. Patsy Mink (D-HI), along with 93 co-sponsors, had just introduced a bill intended to encourage Congress to remove time limits on benefits, pump up funding for subsidized child care, increase training and education options for women—and, most dramatically, legally shift the goal of welfare back to its original aim: reducing child poverty.

Now the Mink bill is all but forgotten, never having made it to the floor of the Republican-controlled House. A long-awaited Senate companion bill fizzled when primary sponsor Paul Wellstone (D-Minnesota) chose instead to throw his weight behind efforts to influence a moderate Senate bill with broader support.

The day the tide changed: February 26, when President Bush laid out his vision for revising Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), the program that replaced Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) in 1996. While most of the media attention focused on Bush's provisions to

promote marriage, the president's new work requirements had a more profound impact on the welfare debate. "Almost overnight," says Mark Greenberg of the Washington-based Center for Law and Social Policy, "the discussion shifted to who could be tougher in imposing new work requirements on families receiving welfare."



PETER ANDREW BOSCH/KRT

A mother in Homestead, Florida trains for workfare.

**W**hile the 1996 welfare law required parents to work in order to receive TANF benefits, in practice a good bit of leeway remained. As caseloads plunged—thanks to the booming economy, and to policies that made it harder to apply for welfare and easier for states to kick people off the rolls—almost all states found themselves eligible for “caseload reduction credits” that allowed them to drastically reduce the number of remaining recipients who had to comply with the new federal rules.

Fears that poor women would be forced wholesale into widespread workfare programs—in which participants are forced to work, often in menial jobs, for nothing more than their usual welfare grant—proved largely unfounded: Aside from Wisconsin (under Gov. Tommy Thompson, now Bush’s secretary of health and human services), New York City and a few other areas, workfare hasn’t caught on. Nationwide, only 6.5 percent of adults receiving TANF are in workfare programs.

Under Bush’s plan, that flexibility would be all but eliminated. States would be required to have 70 percent of their welfare caseload working 40 hours a week, with 24 of those hours in “core” work activities: an unsubsidized job, subsidized job or workfare. This “70/40” plan would do far more than burden poor mothers with extra work hours. “For those people who can’t get an unsubsidized job, the state has really got a choice between running a subsidized jobs program or a work-for-welfare program,” Greenberg says. “And a subsidized jobs program costs much more money to run, so it would create enormous pressure to run large-scale, work-for-welfare programs.”

The 70/40 plan passed the House in May, largely unchanged from Bush’s proposal. Debate then shifted to the Democratic-controlled Senate, where a bill (now officially titled the Work, Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids, or WORK, Act of 2002) reduced total work hours to 30 hours a week, but left the 70 percent threshold and 24-hour “core activities” requirement unchanged.

**A**s even the work-first advocates admit, forcing parents to work longer hours will require more money for childcare. How much? In the various proposals flying around Capitol Hill, the numbers are all over the place—from a token \$2 billion increase over five years in the House bill, to a \$5.5 billion hike in the Senate version. Sen. Jeff Bingaman (D-New Mexico) reportedly plans an amendment to increase that figure to \$7 billion, while a letter signed by Sen. Ted Kennedy and 21 other Democratic senators calls for \$11.25 billion in added childcare funding.

But even as billions of dollars are haggled over, there’s no certainty how much care they would provide, since no one knows

what the economy will look like in coming years. Currently, 33 states are spending more on childcare than on cash assistance, helping ease the impact of cuts in welfare grants. But with the initial windfalls from caseload reduction gone, states are increasingly turning away applicants for childcare aid.

The Children’s Defense Fund estimates that even the \$5.5 billion in the Senate bill would barely be adequate to keep pace with inflation; noting that only one in seven eligible families are currently receiving childcare subsidies, CDF has called for a \$20 billion increase over five years—a figure far beyond anything being bandied about in Congress. “Many people coming off of welfare now are working the third shift, the evening hours, the part-time work,” says Deborah Noble of the Connecticut Alliance for Basic Human Needs. “They don’t have bankers’

hours. And when you need child care on off-hours, you’re going to pay for it.”

Further complicating matters, higher work requirements could dramatically increase the amount of childcare hours needed—going to a 40-hour work week, Clasp estimates, would hike childcare costs by an additional \$1.6 billion a year. Once the horse-trading begins on the Senate floor, and later in conference committee with the House, it’s likely that increased work hours will be placed on the table in exchange for increased childcare funding.

Already Sen. Hillary Clinton

(D-New York), who’d previously denounced higher work requirements, signed on to a 40-hour-a-week work plan in exchange for an increase in childcare funding. (The New York-based group Community Voices Heard responded by hurling waffles onto Clinton’s lawn.)

Another possible tradeoff target is education and training, which was sharply scaled back in 1996. Under current TANF law, recipients are limited to a maximum of one year of education while getting benefits. The Senate bill would up this to two years, while the House would cut it to a mere three months.

Education and training options are seen as an especially important battleground because numerous studies have shown that education—particularly a college-level degree—is by far the most effective means for parents to lift their families out of poverty for good. A 2001 study by the Educational Testing Service estimated that as many as two-thirds of women receiving welfare could benefit from higher education. “Most women on welfare, with less than a semester of preparation, could get into a higher-ed program and never be on public assistance again,” says Diana Spatz, director of LIFETIME, a group of current and former welfare recipients at the University of California-Berkeley. “Consider that the top four occupations over the next five years that pay more than \$10 an hour all require a B.A., what does that say for parents on public assistance? They’re not going to have access to those jobs.”

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**M**eanwhile, numerous other yawning chasms remain between the House and Senate bills, on a wide range of issues whose resolution could affect the lives of poor families in profound and uncertain ways.

**Caregiving.** The Senate bill currently includes \$30 million a year for a 10-state pilot project based on existing programs in Minnesota and Montana, which pay childcare wages for moms to stay home with kids under age 2. Says Kate Kahan of Working for Equality and Economic Liberation, a group instrumental in setting up Montana's At Home Infant Care Program: "The Republicans actually really like this bill, because it's moms staying home with their kids. Who can argue with that?" House Republicans, apparently: There's no caregiving provision in their bill.

**Superwaivers.** An expansion of the waiver program under which individual states have long been allowed to evade federal welfare rules to engage in trial projects, "superwaivers" would allow the president, at a governor's request, to waive the rules governing federal programs from public housing to food stamps—all without consulting Congress. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that superwaivers could affect \$65 billion a year in federal programs. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities has speculated that cash-strapped states would be particularly eager to raid federal food stamp money to help balance their budgets—a move currently against the law, but allowable under superwaivers.

**Pro-marriage legislation.** Though the idea of reducing poverty via wedding rings has prompted much derision and dark humor, its primary impact is likely to be felt at the state budget level, where TANF funds would be diverted to fund marriage promotion. (Half the \$200 million a year would be carved out of the general TANF cash grants, the rest replacing a discontinued "illegitimacy reduction bonus.") The Senate bill would at least allow the option of using these funds on programs to reduce teen pregnancy and domestic violence, something that states are likely to leap at: Most have shown little eagerness to implement the pro-marriage programs urged in the 1996 law, largely limiting themselves to such token gestures as proclamations announcing "National Marriage Day."

**Full family sanctions.** Currently 36 states cut off benefits for children if their parents are found to be out of compliance with TANF rules. (In practice, families can be "sanctioned" for something as small as a missed appointment, often taking months to be reinstated.) The Senate bill would abolish full-family sanctions, while the House bill would mandate them for every state. This could eliminate a lifeline that has helped parents support their families in the face of impossibly restric-

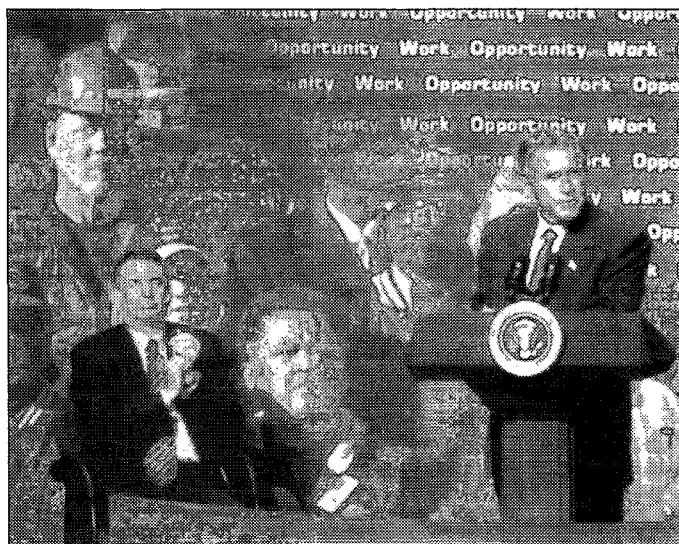
tive policies, explains Spatz: "Some parents actually chose to take a sanction so that they can continue their education and training. They lose the parent portion of the cash grant, but their children still get aid, medical coverage and food stamps."

**Caseload reduction credits.** The Senate bill would replace this with an "employment credit" to encourage states to place people in quality jobs. The House would keep the caseload reduction credit in place, but peg reduction levels to current caseload size rather than 1996 levels, which many fear could set off another round of purging the rolls by any means necessary.

**Legal immigrants.** The Senate bill would restore Medicaid to legal immigrants and allow states the option of giving access to TANF as well—but with no increase in funding, so that states would be forced to find aid for immigrants in their own recession-strapped budgets.

**Time limits.** TANF recipients and their advocates were hoping for provisions to "stop the clock," but time limits have vanished from the political radar since Bush's announcement. Though the 1996 law let states exempt up to 20 percent of their caseloads from the federal five-year lifetime limit, eventually the long-term caseload will outgrow the exemption. In California, according to General Accounting Office, an additional 100,000

families—22 percent of the total state caseload—will hit the five-year mark in just the first six months of 2003.



**Hard sell:** President Bush pushes his plan.

**E**ven as Congress wrangles over these details, it faces a time limit of its own: the original TANF law expires September 30, leaving little time for a Senate floor fight and the conference committee with the House that would follow. How these conflicts are resolved could determine not just the future face of welfare policy, but the fate of the bill itself. Bush has threat-

ened to veto the whole package if too much is modified from his plan, which would likely lead Congress to roll over the current TANF rules for another year.

Regardless of the outcome on Capitol Hill, activists are already gearing up for the state-by-state battles that will inevitably follow, knowing from bitter experience legislative agendas are often less important than how they're carried out on the ground. "They say they want to create 'seamless systems' where families can move from welfare into self-supporting work, and it all sounds so lovely," Spatz says. "The reality is, caseworkers actively discourage people who need drug and alcohol and mental health counseling from getting it, because they don't have the time to fill out the paperwork. And the whole time, the clock is ticking." ■



# MARCOS' MISSING MILLIONS

BY LUCY KOMISAR

Corporate corruption scandals roil the United States, dragging down with them the reputations of the major accounting firms that signed off on—or even designed—fraudulent financial practices. These global auditors were supposed to keep corporations honest. But a closer look at Switzerland, the birthplace of financial legerdemain, shows that accounting deceit is nothing new. Western financial managers cut their teeth designing systems for Third World dictators to loot their countries.

**P**erhaps the most notorious example is Ferdinand Marcos, who is suspected of stealing at least \$10 billion from the Philippines before being overthrown in February 1986. The Philippine government has spent more than 15 years trying to track and recover the money, some of which was secreted away by Swiss bankers and stashed in offshore havens.

Now, a former attorney with accounting firm KPMG in Zurich has come forward claiming she has evidence that on March 23, 1986—just a day before a freeze would be placed on Marcos' accounts—KPMG secretly transferred \$400 million from Credit Suisse Zurich to a Liechtenstein trust on the ex-dictator's behalf.

The attorney, Marie-Gabrielle Koller—named in this article for the first time—first testified about the events behind closed doors before a French parliamentary commission in May 2000. Its report referred to her only as “Madame Z.” Last year, the Quebec native sent her information to U.S. authorities, but elicited no interest from Washington. Now Koller, 46, has privately offered to provide evidence to the Philippine government in exchange for a cut of the amount recovered. With interest, the hidden \$400 million would be worth twice as much today.

**K**oller didn't join KPMG until 1996, when she was assigned to the Credit Suisse account—a decade after the Marcos government fell. She learned of the midnight Marcos money-laundering operation from a colleague that year, after a Zurich court ordered the transfer to the Philippines of another account—originally worth \$356 million—frozen in Switzerland since 1986.

That money had been held on the basis of documents found in the Presidential Palace days after Marcos fled to Honolulu in February 1986. But there were no documents about the \$400 million. Bank officials had been warned that the Swiss Banking Commission, bowing to international pressure, was about to freeze all suspected Marcos accounts.

So, in the dead of night on March 23, 1986, lawyers for KPMG (then known as Fides, a subsidiary of Credit Suisse) moved the \$400 million in Marcos funds to a Liechtenstein trust, Limag Management und Verwaltungs AG—which dispersed the money via new secret “foundations” (in German, *anstalts*). Limag AG was headed by Peter Sprenger, also the director of Liechtenstein's Credit Suisse Trust AG and parlia-



mentary leader of the Vaterlandische (Fatherland) Union, one of Liechtenstein's conservative main parties.

Europeans joke that Liechtenstein is where Swiss bankers go to hide their money. The tiny country, just 72 miles east of Zurich, is the place where the Swiss send their dirtiest customers. Liechtenstein has gotten rich by laundering the money of drug traffickers, Mafiosi, tax cheats and other criminals. A 1999 report from the German secret service described Liechtenstein as a criminal state in the middle of Europe. The German finance minister denounced the country as "a worm in the European fruit."

Indeed, when clients wanted to transact "sensitive" business, KPMG referred them to associates in Liechtenstein—with the assurance of added secrecy and protection from foreign law enforcement inquiries. Koller says even Liechtenstein was initially "unhappy" with Marcos' money being transferred there, but Limag resolved the problems by giving a well-paid board chairmanship to Prince Constantin, the elderly uncle of constitutional monarch Prince Hans-Adam II.

"The bank bought the Prince's uncle," Koller explained to the French parliamentary commission that was investigating money-laundering in Switzerland. "Everybody is bought in Liechtenstein."

In 1997, Koller was fired by the manager of KPMG Zurich (which had been made independent of Credit Suisse—at least officially—so that it could continue as its auditor under new

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accounting regulations). She was sacked after testifying against a Credit Suisse Trust AG client who was involved in a conspiracy to sell tainted blood forcibly taken from prisoners by the Stasi, the East German secret police.

In addition, Koller believes she was fired because Credit Suisse realized that she—like other KPMG and bank employees—knew what happened to the Marcos money. She told the French inquiry: "My superior told me ... that I would never work again as a lawyer and that my career was finished in Switzerland and in Liechtenstein because I had spoken to the authorities."

Last year Koller approached the Justice Department via Virginia lawyer David Smith, a former associate director of the Asset Forfeiture Office. There was no response from the Justice Department's anti-money laundering division or from the FBI. Both offices declined to comment for this story.

So in February, Koller anonymously approached the Philippine government through her attorney, Ian M. Comisky of high-powered Philadelphia law firm Blank, Rome, Comisky & McCauley, which has close ties to the Bush administration.

In his letter, Comisky wrote, "KPMG-Fides and Limag AG employees made admissions regarding the transfer of the Marcos monies to Liechtenstein, and our client has contemporaneous memoranda prepared at the time of the admissions."

The letter, obtained by *In These Times*, also notes that Credit Suisse financial statements did not reveal its relationship to

## Growing Evidence of a Swiss Cover-Up

Koller's documents, which show that KPMG-Fides and Limag AG employees transferred funds that should have been frozen, support the Philippine government's assertions that the Swiss government and banks are lying when they consistently deny that additional accounts exist.

Ruben Carranza of the Philippine Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG) already has documents indicating the Credit Suisse transfers—an operation that Marcos agent Michael de Guzman nicknamed "Big Bird"—and others after March 1986.

The transfers had been discussed in a July 1986 affidavit by de Guzman, an Austrian banker who had been hired by the Marcoses to move their money from Switzerland. De Guzman said that on March 24, 1986, he met in Zurich with

Ernest Scheller, a high-ranking Credit Suisse executive, who told him that funds and assets had already been transferred.

De Guzman also said Gustave Adolphe Rychner, a senior Fides official, told him the day after the freeze that the funds had been transferred to "ensure that neither the Philippine government nor the Swiss authorities would be successful in the sequestration of the Marcos deposits and investments" and that "the foundations and the account names have already been changed."

Philippine authorities also have a document, signed by Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos, which orders the trustees of the Winthrop Foundation in Liechtenstein to send assets to be liquidated to a Fides account, "attn. Mr. Rychner." An attached page holds the signatures of both Rychner and Walter Fessler, manager of Credit

Suisse. The Philippines found the documents at the Presidential Palace after Marcos fled.

The Philippines asked the Swiss to question Rychner, Scheller and Fessler, who was also the Philippines' honorary consul. However, Peter Cosandey, the Zurich district attorney, who for 12 years ran Switzerland's inquiry into the Marcos money, never did. Neither did he inquire into the role of Limag AG.

Carranza, who joined the money hunt years later, says he asked Cosandey about the midnight transfer, but the Swiss district attorney never replied. But, Carranza says, "We have documents showing transfers after the freeze, as late as April." He counts 86 transfers after the March 24 freeze, mostly done by Credit Suisse.

After the Swiss Banking Commission ordered the freeze, the banks appealed



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Marie-Gabrielle Koller

Limag AG—though Credit Suisse Trust AG and Limag AG share an address in Vaduz, Liechtenstein's capital.

In exchange for the documents, Comisky asked that his client receive \$125,000 up front and then another \$100,000 plus 2 percent of the amount recovered. Given Switzerland's banking-secrecy laws, and KPMG's past record, Koller is also asking that the Philippine government pay the costs of any litigation arising from her cooperation with it. And she wants a "compulsion order," so

that she will have a defense against Swiss and Liechtenstein banking secrecy laws that punish whistleblowers with fines or jail.

Comisky's letter was first made public by *Philippine Inquirer* reporter Donna S. Cueto in May. But Cueto did not name Koller, whose name was never mentioned in the letter. Koller denied in an e-mail to *In These Times* that she was the secret witness. However, a staff member of the French National Assembly arranged a contact with an intermediary who named Koller as "Madame Z" (an identification also supported by several other sources). Comisky did not dispute that she was his client, but declined to discuss the case.

Peter Herzog of KPMG denies Koller's claims, saying, "KPMG has never been involved in any action regarding the Marcos affairs." Martin Somogyi, a spokesman for Credit Suisse, said in a written statement: "Credit Suisse cooperated fully and transparently with the Swiss authorities as regards this matter. In 1986, we supplied full details of the Marcos family accounts to the Swiss

authorities, who then forwarded this information to the Philippine authorities. All of the Marcos family's funds were frozen in 1986, and movements of funds prior to the freeze were also reversed and frozen. All of the blocked funds in Switzerland were transferred in 1997 to a blocked account in the Philippines."

**B**ut claims that more accounts exist come from an unusual source. In 1998, Marcos' loquacious widow Imelda gave an interview to The Associated Press and AFP in which she declared that, "There is more Marcos wealth that this government is not yet aware of, but for the time being I can admit that there is only \$800 million in various international banks."

While the Philippine Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG), has been struggling for years to track down the missing millions, in late June, Haydee Yorac, chairwoman of the PCGG, declined Koller's proposition to pay her \$225,000 plus 2 percent of the amount recovered. However, she indicated interest in talking with Koller and having her provide assistance, with reward based on the value of the help.

"The letter doesn't really contain much by way of information," explains Ruben Carranza, who's in charge of litigation and research for the PCGG, adding that Comisky has not yet replied.

One might expect the Swiss government, now under increased pressure to combat its reputation as a protector of criminal money-laundering, to undertake a serious investigation. But Koller knows better. "In my experience the authorities have no interest in fighting any form of organized crime," she told *In These Times* via e-mail. "Or at least that interest stops where competing financial interests begin." ■

**Lucy Komisar**, a New York journalist, is writing a book about how bank and corporate secrecy support international crime and corruption. She reported from the Philippines at the time of the Marcos overthrow.

against release of documents connected to the Marcos accounts. Five years later the Swiss Supreme Court ruled that the papers could be sent to the Philippines. Then, after the banks provided documents to the Swiss government, Cosandey waited nine months to pass them on.

When the papers finally arrived in 1991, the Manila government discovered that the only accounts frozen were those for which it had initially supplied documents discovered at the Presidential Palace. Later, after having held on to the funds for years, Swiss banks moved the money to Manila in time to avoid falling under pending Swiss legislation that would have permitted a transfer without restrictions—allowing the Philippine government to get the money. Instead, they sent the money under the condition it remain frozen and could be unfrozen only by the Swiss court.

The conflicting claims have yet to be

settled, and the \$250 million deposited in the Philippine National Bank has now grown to \$650 million.

Cosandey was widely assumed to be taking his cues from the Swiss government. In 1995, he urged the Philippines to hire attorney Martin Kurer, who it turned out had been attorney of the Swiss branch of the Security Bank and Trust Corporation of Manila, owned by a Marcos crony. In 1998, Cosandey announced that after a dozen years of searching, he'd found no more Marcos accounts. Soon after, he resigned as Zurich district attorney and, claiming his reward, became a partner and director of Forensic and Litigation Services at KPMG Switzerland.

**T**he Philippines is still trying to get the bank documents of six Swiss banks that admitted administering Marcos deposits, as well as the documents of Marcos founda-

tion accounts in five other banks. It has been a long, grueling process. "Some of the cases I am looking at now as commissioner are cases I read in my first year of law school at the University of the Philippines in 1987," Carranza says. "I never thought I would have to work on these cases 16 years later."

Carranza remains driven by a personal stake in the outcome of the cases against Marcos. "In 1984, when I was 19 years old, I was detained by the Philippine military under Marcos and charged with inciting to sedition," he says. "I was released a few days later due to the intercession of religious leaders."

And he's not alone: Among those who would like to see the accounts recovered are more than 9,500 claimants in a human rights class-action suit who won a \$2 billion award from a Hawaii court against the Marcos estate in 1995. They have yet to see any money. ■



# Imperialism: The Sequel

By G. Pascal Zachary

**T**he scene seemed out of the 19th century. The entire cabinet of the government of Ghana, including the West African country's president, gathered together

## Imperialism: A Study

By J.A. Hobson

University of Michigan Press

386 pages, \$20.95

this April in a swank hotel to explain their goals and achievements to an array of foreigners, soliciting advice on how to improve policies and government programs.

Ghanaian President John Kufuor and his ministers were not simply swept up in a mania for sharing. They have never invited their own citizens to survey their activities. But foreigners carry much bigger checkbooks than voters. After three days of meetings, the representatives of foreign governments, including the United States, agreed to collectively donate \$750 million to help make Ghana's large budget deficit a lot smaller.

Around the world, governments of former colonies (Ghana belonged to Britain until 1957) increasingly sing for their supper, trying to please a range of well-heeled foreign donors in order to get more aid. This is not imperialism, of course, since leaders of poor governments can always say no. But they rarely do, and the line between independence and surrender to foreign powers is blurry. Does anyone consider Afghanistan a sovereign nation simply because it agreed to "allow" foreign soldiers to remain on its turf following the fall of the Taliban government?

Afghanistan is not alone as a ward of foreign powers. Kosovo remains a U.N. protectorate, and until its independence last month, so was East Timor. Sierra Leone is essentially administered by the U.N., with help from the British who staff many key government offices, including the police, and whose military ensure order. In Cambodia, an array of

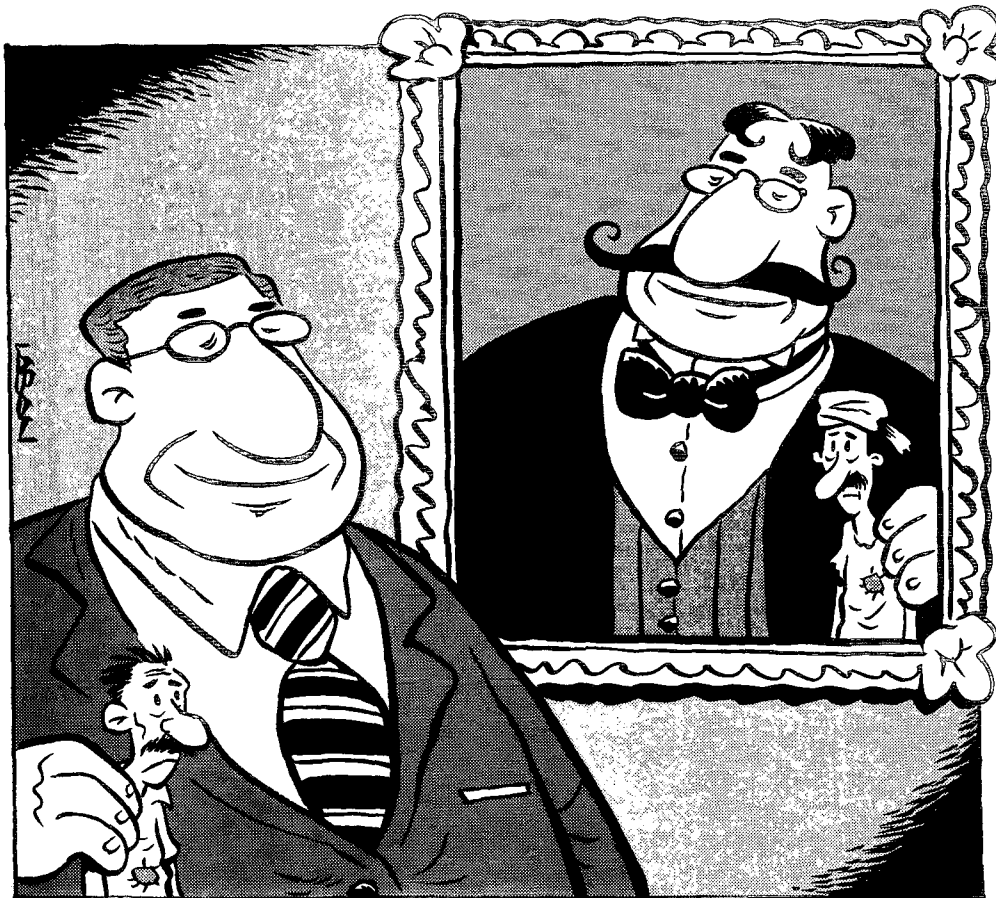
international organizations keep the Southeast Asian country from reverting to disorder.

**D**efenders of these interventions assay their value on humanitarian grounds. If a country is falling apart, why not send in troops or technical experts to restore order or take over the running of schools, hospitals, police? From this position, there is only a short leap to the conclusion that "failed" states and "rogue" governments can be overthrown and turned into colonies of the international community. Such is the vision that some have for Iraq post-Saddam Hussein.

Advocates have devised a friendly term for these interventions: "reluctant imperialism." Writing in the March issue of *Foreign Affairs*, an editorial writer for the *Washington Post* argued that "anti-imperialist restraint is becoming harder to sustain" and that the United States and

Europe should get back into the business of running colonies—albeit through the machinery of the United Nations. One of the advisers to British Prime Minister Tony Blair has been more blunt in his published reports: In carving up the world among the Great Powers to increase international security, "we need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era—force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary to deal with those who still live in the 19th century world of every state for itself."

If imperialism—the scourge of the Victorian era—is making a comeback in the political arena, there are signs of its rediscovery elsewhere. Many talk today about a "new imperialism" promoted by financial capital and multinational corporations. Others see threats in the form of powerful non-governmental organizations that have the money and clout to force governments to respond to their



complaints. Much credit for the renewed interest in imperialism stems from discomfort, especially in Europe and Asia, with American power. In recent years, opposition to American imperialism mainly organized around cultural symbols of leisure and entertainment. Disney and McDonald's became convenient targets against which critics of American pop culture could vent their rage.

There may be new forms of imperialism, but observers have been seeing something "new" in imperialism for more than a century. In 1969, Harry Magdoff, editor of the Marxist *Monthly Review*, published an influential book titled *The Age of Imperialism: The Economics of U.S. Foreign Policy*. Ernesto "Che" Guevara was consumed by a battle against "Yankee imperialism" before he was killed in the jungles of Bolivia in 1967. Fifty years earlier, in the carnage of World War I, Lenin penned his most important pamphlet, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, in which he identified the political annexation of territories by the Great Powers as "the monopoly stage of capitalism" and described "an essential feature of imperialism [as] the striving for hegemony."

**T**he father of all analysis of new imperialisms was an obscure economist and prolific English writer named J.A. Hobson. One hundred years ago this month, Hobson published *Imperialism: A Study*, in which he demolished the 19th-century justifications for imperialism that sprang from a Darwinian understanding of world relations. More civilized nations, it was believed, had a duty to colonize "lesser" nations in order to bring them up to standard.

Hobson, on whose work every other writer on imperialism depends, recoiled at this benevolent explanation, finding that economic gain drove political annexations and the formation of colonies. Influenced by Marx, Hobson searched for the economic motives for seizing faraway peoples and places, using the British Empire as his central case. What he found, however, seemed contradictory: Colonies and imperialism were a drain on the national treasury—such a drain that the benefits of trade with colonies failed to offset the costs of acquiring the colonies. Economically, then, imperialism was a failure. So then, what was, in his words, "the economic

taproot of imperialism"? Hobson found, again drawing on Marx, that elements of the financial and economic elite benefited from imperialist adventures. "Although the new Imperialism has been bad business for the nation, it has been good business for certain classes and certain trades within the nation."

If we are indeed entering a new period of imperialism, Hobson is a sound guide to what may come. He writes boldly and

**"We need to revert to the rougher methods of an earlier era—force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary."**

clearly, and his pithy insights into the world economy stand as a model of economic writing. "We moderns wish the lower races to exploit their own lands for our benefit," he writes, giving a succinct explanation of how Americans justify consuming 25 percent of the world's resources. Surveying the many instances in which the British government intervened to protect the foreign interests of companies, he writes: "There is no support for the dogma that 'Trade follows the flag.'"

At base, he insists, imperialist endeavors flow from the central crisis of capitalism: overproduction. "The rich," he writes, "will never be so ingenious as to spend enough to prevent overproduction." Trade is the answer to overproduction, and imperialism is an effort to capture foreign markets. Yet Hobson sees only "a false economy" arising from imperialism, for the simple reason that "it is not indeed necessary to own a country in order to do trade with it or invest capital with it."

Reading Hobson, I am struck by the many parallels between 2002 and 1902. One hundred years ago, he saw that globalization—then known as imperialism—meant that it was impossible for one country to leave another country alone. World capitalism made isolation, even if desirable, an impossibility. "Complete isolation is no longer possible even for the remotest island; absolute self-sufficiency is no more possible for a nation than for

an individual." The interconnectedness of the world's peoples meant, in Hobson's mind, that a "sane" imperialism must arise—an imperialism in which the foreign power is genuinely "devoted to the protection, education and self-development of a 'lower race.'" Hobson essentially endorses what is known today as "humanitarian intervention."

While he believes an imperial project can be carried out for "the good of humanity," Hobson is alert to the barriers against success—because imperial projects often bring one country into contact with an alien people and place. In practice, Hobson saw a multitude of failures in imperialism. He found British imperial rulers to be "distinctly parasitic ... their chief work being that of organizing native labor for their support." The British project of civilizing India, he concluded, "is a complete delusion."

As Americans embark on a new imperial project—of rescuing failed states and winning the "clash of civilizations" so that terrorists have no haven—we should be alert to the possibility that we will record our own "complete" delusions. The U.S. defense and occupation of Kuwait ten years ago had much to do with insuring oil supplies, and the Afghan war is motivated at least in part by the prospect of Central Asian oil flowing through the war-torn country. Hobson is vague, unfortunately, on how we can defend ourselves against imperial quagmires that benefit only "certain classes." But his general warning rings as true as it did a century ago:

The power of the imperialist forces within the nation to use the national resources for their private gain, by operating the instrument of the State, can only be overthrown by the establishment of a genuine democracy, the direction of public policy by the people for the people through representatives over whom they exercise real control. Whether this or any other nation is yet competent for such a democracy may well be a matter of grave doubt, but until and unless the external policy of a nation is "broad-based upon a people's will" there appears little hope of remedy. ■

G. Pascal Zachary is the author of *The Global Me, a study of globalization*.



Charred wreckage in North Belfast following riots in January.



# Souls of Eire

By Shawn Gillen

Since the American press delivered glowing reports early this summer of the Queen's Golden Jubilee, sectarian violence has flared in the United Kingdom's first and last major colony. Throughout the summer, dreary bouts of violence have continued unabated

Despite these heightened tensions, the peace process still has some hold on Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and Tony Blair now meet on Downing Street to share ideas on how to diffuse sectarian violence. Political change remains palpable, even inevitable, as demographic changes in the North gradually ensure a Catholic majority. Citizens in Belfast have recently elected the city's first Sinn Fein Mayor, Alex Maskey, after the small cross-community Alliance Party swung in Maskey's favor. The growth of Sinn Fein as a viable party—they now have two members in the province's 12-minister power-sharing legislature—has helped keep the IRA cease-fire intact. Loyalists, however, keep the party under careful scrutiny and continue to regard its legitimacy as questionable.

Northern Ireland's "Troubles" receive scant attention these days in the States. Optimists on both sides of the Irish Sea and the Atlantic want to believe the conflict is over, and American media have focused on civil unrest and terrorism elsewhere. The Bush administration has also never raced to extend what was likely Clinton's great foreign policy success, and Bush's current war against terrorism at home makes it more difficult for it to be critical of the United Kingdom's handling of civil conflict.

That's a shame, because understanding how a tentative cease-fire was achieved there could help the United States better understand its war on terrorism. Ireland's sectarian struggles, after all, have outlasted the rise and fall of the British Empire, the partition of Ireland and two World Wars. That so much progress toward peace has been made in the past eight years is highly suggestive that means other than continual war could be found to broker peace in the Middle East.

If there is a lack of news about Northern Ireland in American newspapers and television screens, there is no absence of books on the subject. Irish-Americans have never had trouble generating sentimental accounts of their return to Eire, but now more Americans are willing to write about their politically conflicted journeys to the North. Generally, first-hand accounts of the North's Troubles either romanticize Sinn Fein and the IRA as heroes, or they label them all terrorists and hooligans. Former California State Sen. Tom Hayden's *Irish on the Inside* may be the best example of the former category. Hayden's book makes clear what the IRA and the British have claimed all along: Irish Americans, both well-intentioned and misled, are the Troubles' third major player.

Much of *Irish on the Inside*—maybe too much—is about Hayden's attempt to excavate an "Irish soul" that allies him, he believes, with people of color. Hayden has always been admired as a champion of multicultural education, but his embrace of his ethnicity will test the limits of most readers on the subject, Irish or not. He believes that Irish-Americans, like American blacks, Hispanics and Jews, are victims of similar oppressive structures. Irish survivors of the Great Hunger of the 1840s—the worst human disaster of its kind in 19th century Europe—also endured centuries-long racism that depicted them as subhuman primates, responsible for their own plight during the Famine. Many Irish who immigrated to the United States internalized these depictions, much like other oppressed minority groups. Then out of a sense of shame about their past, Irish-Americans assimilated into patriotic social conservatives. Filled with unchanneled

**Irish on the Inside: In Search of the Soul of Irish America**

By Tom Hayden

Verso

290 pages, \$25

**Ireland's Holy Wars: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500-2000**

By Marcus Tanner

Yale University Press

pages, \$29.95

through the volatile loyalist marching season and up until the recent IRA apology for the deaths of "non-combatant" victims. On July 19, pro-British loyalists hurled petrol bombs at the parochial home of two Catholic priests. The next day, another loyalist mob torched the home of a Catholic social worker. This all-too-familiar cycle continued through a subsequent series of shootings, beatings and riots that were at last quelled by rubber bullets.

self-hatred, they strike out at other competing ethnic and racial groups.

Thus the true Irish soul for Hayden lies not in the racist diatribes of Father Coughlin, the machine politics of Richard J. Daley, or other self-hating Irish Americans who question Sinn Fein, the Provisional IRA or drink themselves into a stupor on St. Patrick's Day. The genuine Irish soul "contains seeds of rebelliousness rather than conformity, of moral idealism rather than amoral materialism, of communal ethics rather than individualistic ones, of mysticism and even otherworldliness that challenge modernity." Readers seeking examples of this Irish soul need look no further, Hayden argues, than Che Guevara (whose great-grandfather was Irish), C. Wright Mills, Gerry Adams—and, well, Tom Hayden.

Ian Buruma, writing recently in *The New York Review of Books*, dismissed Hayden's ideas on the Irish character as a symptom of an unseemly narcissism that blindly accepts nationalist fantasies. It is tempting to join Buruma's condemnation of the book, but Hayden's attempt to understand how his-

tory has affected his consciousness is more than mirror-gazing. He worries that if whites in America do not come to terms with their own history, they will further distance themselves from the sufferings of others. It's not a new idea, though it finds more powerful echoes in the writings of Cornel West and James Baldwin.

Although Hayden's descriptions of cities like Derry and Belfast during the Troubles are well crafted, he never makes a convincing case for Sinn Fein and the IRA. Everything he discovers in the North seems an extension and confirmation of his own brand of California liberal politics. Even when Hayden argues that the civil rights movement in the North and the subsequent Troubles are an extension of the quest for Irish self-governance, he relies too much on his own status as a former radical who knows a progressive when he sees one.

As a consequence, the most troubling portion of Hayden's book are those sections based on his notions that the IRA and its leaders are Irish stand-ins for '60s American radicals. Certainly, early civil rights marchers in the North chanted "We

Shall Overcome" and many members of the IRA were socialists, but at least an equally high number of Irish republicans share nationalistic aspirations and a Catholic brand of social conservatism that continues to distinguish them from the American left. Many Irish republicans also dream of a united Ireland in which native

**Ireland's future rests on the inevitable fact that, even in the North, it is becoming a multiracial, multicultural nation.**

Irish Catholics live without the taint of immigrants and Protestants, a vision that alienates them from younger Irish in multinational cities like Dublin—and Belfast.

Hayden at times acknowledges the darker side of his Irish peers, but it hardly tempers his enthusiasm for them. When he meets with a group of reformed loyalist prisoners who work with released IRA prisoners, his judgment of fellow progressives is clouded by nationalism. Upon encountering a born-again former prisoner, Hayden writes, "I didn't hesitate to shake his hand warmly, although he was the first Catholic-killer I'd ever knowingly spoken to." Then, within the space of two pages, Hayden dismisses the Irish left's dream of working-class solidarity because religion and nationality will continue to trump class consciousness. Sectarian bigotry, he believes, is planted in Protestants at too young an age.

**R**ead alongside Marcus Tanner's *Ireland's Holy Wars: The Struggle for a Nation's Soul, 1500-2000*, Hayden's book becomes more shallow and self-referential. Tanner, a British reporter for the *Independent*, is making something of a career writing exhaustive histories of troubled nations. Work on his first such book, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*, began as an effort to explain contemporary Croatia, but led Tanner back to the 7th century. *Ireland's Holy Wars* also links the distant past with the present, and in many ways, it's a valuable achievement.

*Ireland's Holy Wars* does not offer ready answers for loyalists, republicans or Irish Americans, but it explains the complex relationships between various Protestant sects, the Catholic Church and the IRA.

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Tanner has the patience to explain and explore events Hayden only puts in his footnotes. His skill as a writer helps make his accounts of the colonization of Ireland in 1609, and the subsequent massacre of Protestant settlers by indigenous Irish in 1641, so palpable they cast a shadow over Tanner's visits to Protestant and Catholic shrines in modern Ireland.

Perhaps Tanner's most controversial idea is that current conflicts in the North between Unionism and Nationalism remain essentially a struggle between Protestants and Catholics, though Unionists and Republicans claim it is more a quest for national identity. Genuine Irish political radicals have never been entirely happy with the conjunction of Irishness and Catholicism, since many were drawn from the Protestant upper classes. Ecumenical radicalism faded, Tanner believes, after an especially bloody series of massacres in 1798 in County Wexford that included the burning alive of hundreds of Protestants in a barn in Scullabogue.

The legacy of Scullabogue, and other massacres like it on both sides, resulted in the hardening of the idea that to be Irish was to be Catholic, and to be Protestant meant clinging to a British identity. It also led to the partition of Northern Ireland from the Republic and continues to fuel tensions in the North. Catholic and Protestant children in most of Northern Ireland still live in separate neighborhoods, read different histories of Ireland, and take part in separate cultural events.

**T**anner notes optimistically that the tentative cease-fire in the North has come about as the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian Church and the Catholic Church have distanced themselves from politics and the violence. It also doesn't hurt that all three churches have long suffered declining attendance. Ireland's future rests in the inevitable fact that, even in the North, it is becoming a multiracial, multicultural nation. Tanner writes that the arrival of this new nation will challenge

the old certainties of a dualistic political landscape and render the struggle between Protestants and Catholics redundant. It's a demographic optimism that makes Tom Hayden's celebration of his Irish Catholic roots dated and even reactionary.

But Hayden is right that conciliation in the North became possible only when both Unionists and Republicans recognized the legitimacy of their traditions and focused together on improving the North's aging economy. Clinton's success hinged on his recognizing Sinn Féin as a legitimate political party, and on using U.S. influence to convince multinational corporations to sponsor job training programs and open up shop throughout the region. That common-sense combination of recognition, shared mutual interest and job creation has become a neglected formula for peace that could—and should—be nurtured elsewhere. ■

**Shawn Gillen** is an associate professor of English at Beloit College.

## Historyshock

By Paul Buhle

**K**im Stanley Robinson is that rarest phenomenon of fiction, the keen stylist who understands at once hard science, global politics and the wide sweep of history. A Ph.D. in English and the most insightful critic-scholar of science-fiction giant Philip K. Dick,

**The Years of Rice and Salt**  
By Kim Stanley Robinson  
Bantam  
658 pages, \$25.95

Robinson abandoned an academic career to write fiction. His non-sci-fi volumes have been varied and fascinating—from *The Novels of P.K. Dick* to an ecological trilogy about California—and most of them based on first-hand knowledge as well as close study. But it is his science fiction, especially his Mars books (*Red Mars*, *Green Mars*, *Blue Mars* and *The Martians*) that have won Robinson wide and evidently lasting fame.

No science-fiction author since Dick and Ursula Le Guin has seen so clearly the

dilemmas that the corporate-military system, feeding upon war and environmental plunder, has prepared for civilizations near and far. All three authors, interestingly, happened to be from a futurist-oriented California: the older two raised in Berkeley or thereabouts, Robinson in Orange County. But where Dick stresses the psychological, and Le Guin (the daughter of famed anthropologist Alfred Kroeber) the anthropological, Robinson is a master of hard science, especially geology. Readers indifferent toward politics and those inclined rightward nevertheless thrill to Robinson's close descriptions of what changes in the land have been wrought by the ages—and may be wrought in the future through "terraforming" the landscape and climate of barren planets.

In the Mars series, plunder is the real corporate agenda for colonization, along with the overpriced hope of somehow saving an ecologically devastated and desperately overcrowded planet Earth. Most of the space voyagers, chosen for their scientific credentials, shun the corporate agenda. But as they devise areas for

colonization, they divide sharply over agendas "green" (turning Mars into a giant garden) or "red" (preserving most of its natural landscape). Eventually, however, the corporate threat leads to mass revolts among reds and greens alike, and the establishment of secret cooperative

**No Hitler, no Stalin and  
no Henry Kissinger—  
but also no Beethoven,  
no Brecht and no  
Homer Simpson.**

(and deeply feminist) outposts—all of which are met with repression.

**H**ere and there, often indirectly, Robinson has also sought to come to grips with religious passion in all its varieties. *The Years of Rice and Salt*, his new book, deals more directly with religion, and more directly with earthly religions, than his earlier works do, and for a very good reason: This is not about the future but an alternative past, where spirituality remains nonetheless familiar.

Well, not exactly familiar to all of us. Robinson has proposed a decisive shift in

world history: The plague that wiped out huge swaths of European populations in the High Middle Ages went on to succeed in wiping out just about all white folks. Christendom has been reduced to a trace, practically a folk memory in other cultures. In what was never known as North and South America, the genocide of the native inhabitants never took place. Neither was there Hitler, nor Stalin, nor Truman; no Henry Kissinger, nor Ariel Sharon and no George W. Bush—now there's a series of happy thoughts! But also no Beethoven, no Elvis, no Brecht, no Katharine Hepburn and definitely no Homer Simpson.

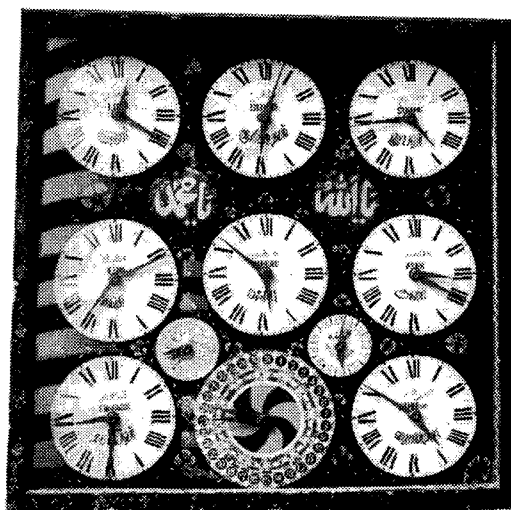
But empires aplenty preceded the rise of Europe's global outreach, and as Robinson sees it, they surely would have made up for Europe's absence. Commercial expansion and the expropriation and exploitation of native dwellers, armored with the religious and pseudo-ethical rationalization always required for looting and slaughter, simply takes different paths.

Robinson wrote *The Years of Rice and Salt* before 9/11, but his central choice of Islam seems unerring in retrospect. Since Europe is empty (aside, naturally, from its plants and animals, of which we hear rather too little in this volume), Islam naturally expands westward. Meanwhile, the Chinese hold onto their large and deeply bureaucratic regional empire, the Aztecs or some version of them continue a regional consolidation, and Native North Americans gather enough knowledge to slow the expansions from various directions and grow their own commonwealth. Not greatly elaborated upon, this last is definitely the most matrilineal society, and the most egalitarian.

Islam gets the most attention for a very good reason, although Robinson doesn't quite say so. Contrary to the Fox Network and just about every politician in Washington, premodern Islamic society looks a great deal like its premodern Christian counterpart. The bonding of various Islamic factions, continually warring against each other, rests in their common Arabic language and culture—much as the warring Christian nations bonded (and still bond) with their own claims of blood and culture.

So the Islamists increasingly search out natural resources and potentially servile populations, reach limits at points of successful resistance, enjoy their own Renaissance (with inevitable praise to Allah), and evolve in new ways thanks to the inevitable mixture and overlap of civilizations. By way of contrast, Robinson offers us mainly the Chinese, indifferent to Western theism, but scarcely less locked in assorted contradictions of class and gender.

These varied civilizations have a rich inner life of the kind that old-fashioned,



presidents-and-generals history ignores. That inner life constitutes the experience of most of Robinson's diverse cast of characters. As he neatly redraws regional maps for our closer understanding of the big picture, he posits reincarnation as a way of establishing links of consciousness across centuries.

It's an odd stroke, but it sets up one element of the crucial final third of this large and complex novel. If passage through the "bardo," the waiting room between reincarnations, is both necessary and painful (because so little progress is possible in a lifetime, and because most lives are contorted by the unhappiness of the world), then what Marx called "prehistory" can be seen as one long bardo, a collective awaiting. An elderly, interracial married couple, after a lifetime of scholarship sharing knowledge of their respective cultures—Chinese and Arabic—arrives at this

philosophical conclusion more or less together. Afterward, the consciousness of more scientific knowledge, and intelligent caution at the use of scientific knowledge, occupy greater narrative space.

If in this counter-history there was no Marx or Engels, and no Bakunin or Proudhon, what about the history of communist, socialist or anarchist movements and ideas? Robinson offers neither direct parallel nor outright contrast with European revolutions. Among the Muslims, a sort of Liberation Theology emerges intermittently, out of the sense that the true values of the religion have been corrupted but may be restored. What can be called a socialist-feminist society at the periphery rebels and governs itself for a while, until reconquered. Feminism, even if not called that, mightily takes center-stage in the final chapters, not at all accidentally as society acquires sufficient scientific knowledge to exterminate itself. In a scene that could have been written for today's Venezuela, a popular movement with the poor and working women at the center successfully halts a military coup. Then, after a brief celebration, its members go back to work.

Ultimately, what thoughtful socialists used to call a "religion of humanity" comes to be seen as the proper, modern successor to the bardo. Collective experience (what we historians like to call social history, but now grown self-conscious) is the real reincarnation. Within that conceptual framework, various necessities like forest and water management and animal protection take on a life that our self-acclaimed Western civilization has never really given them. What Robinson has done, in short, is to establish the continuities of (plural) socialisms within the shell of drastic historical difference. This is not his only purpose—he is a novelist, after all—but it is a very large thing to have accomplished. ■

Paul Buhle's latest books are *Radical Hollywood* (The New Press) and *Insurgent Images: The Agitprop Murals of Mike Alewitz* (Monthly Review Press). An extended interview of Robinson by Buhle appears in the July-August Monthly Review.



# See Green People

By Joshua Rothkopf

**S**igns is about Earth's infestation by claw-fingered aliens, but its scenes of a rural Pennsylvanian household stunned in front of their television set as the outside world unravels go far deeper. Here is the homeland, far

## Signs

Written and directed by  
M. Night Shyamalan

from secure, and a family transfixed by urgent bulletins and city skylines. *Signs* is a tense experience; even the opening credits lunge at your throat with orchestral shrieks. It may one day reveal itself as a minor classic, a new *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* for the manufactured scare of its day. Both films accrue suggestiveness in local miniature; if Thornton Wilder ever staged an intimate version of *Independence Day*, it would probably look a lot like this.

If we're going to have alien invasion movies, I'll take such close encounters over gung-ho fighter pilots saving the planet. The idea works a lot better than you'd think: Graham Hess (Mel Gibson) is the story's lapsed man-in-black, a former minister whose faith has crumbled as a result of his wife's accidental death. As if that weren't enough, life in the rustic farmhouse hasn't turned out quite as expected, with mysterious crop circles scaring the bejeesus out of his two youngsters, and the family dog suddenly gone vicious. (Gibson tenses into the non-heroic role with

in to help out with the kids, though one might at first take Phoenix for a disheveled third son, crashed in an adjacent bedroom.

This first section circles cagily around the unthinkable, pitting our skepticism against humor and distraction. The tension is a familiar one: M. Night Shyamalan doesn't have a last name that lends itself euphoniously to an adjective, but if it did, this is what we would mean by it. At root, his films are patient vindications of crazy faiths, of ghosts and comic book heroes.

tured on video crashing a little boy's birthday party; the news anchor warns viewers they may find the footage "disturbing." It certainly is that, but you can feel the movie coarsening its tactics as the family barricades itself in the basement: The lights go out, doors start thumping, one of the kids has an asthma attack, etc. Naturally, it's all tastefully done (cinematographer Tak Fujimoto's shadow palette is the star here), but there's no avoiding a certain deflation when the otherworldly threat turns out to be so, well, zombie-ish.

Why do they hate us? Then as now, it makes no difference. But Shyamalan rebounds with his stupefying last reel, all but guaranteeing *Signs* its rightful place as an uncanny document of



TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

If Thornton Wilder staged an intimate version of *Independence Day*, it would look like this.

Loneliness is his theme, and when blessed with courageous performers, as in *The Sixth Sense*, he can take us just about anywhere. The fractured family of *Signs* requires some convincing of the things slithering nightly in their cornfields; in those moments of vulnerability and doubt, they, like Shyamalan, have us in their grip.

**S**o it comes as something of a let-down when out of the bag jumps the cat: slinky, olive-skinned ETs in all their undeniable funkiness. Bug-eyed and scowling, they pretty much fit the bill for Central Galaxy Casting. One gets trapped in a pantry, another is cap-

record. There's no purpose in spoiling the string of coincidences and symbols that carry us home, but it's impossible not to gawk at a salvation so baldly faith-based—mysticism versus mayhem in the era of Bush II. You stumble out of the theater into post-invasion America, the white flash of Graham's restored collar fresh in memory, and wonder how godless you are. *Signs*, like the best genre work, is utterly of the moment; for all its terrorized genuflecting, it's sure to grow in fascination as that moment inevitably recedes. ■

Joshua Rothkopf can be reached at [rothkopf@inthesetimes.com](mailto:rothkopf@inthesetimes.com).

Every era gets the  
*Invasion of the Body  
Snatchers* that it  
deserves.

notable modesty; he even appears slightly shorter.) Rounding out the unhappy family is Merrill (Joaquin Phoenix), Graham's brother and a once-promising minor leaguer currently pursuing not much of anything. He's moved

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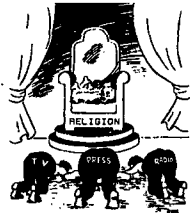
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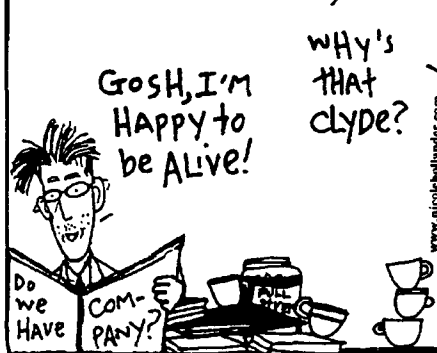
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GOSH, I'M  
HAPPY TO  
BE ALIVE!

WHY'S  
THAT  
CLYDE?

"BECAUSE ASTRONOMERS HAVE DISCOVERED A PLANET ONLY 41 LIGHT YEARS AWAY IN A NEAR CIRCULAR ORBIT ALMOST THE SAME AS JUPITER. IT COULD BE LIKE EARTH! IT COULD HAVE LIFE ON IT!" "THAT'S GREAT CLYDE," I SAID, "BECAUSE SOON THIS PLANET WILL BE DESTROYED BY THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL WARMING, AND WE'LL NEED A NEW PLANET TO MOVE TO." I TOOK OUT MY NOTEBOOK. "CLYDE, WHAT'S THIS PLANET'S MEAN TEMPERATURE IN AUGUST AND CAN I NAME IT?"

8-1

NAME THAT PLANET!

NEW NAMES

By Nicole Hollander



protest art—in particular a series of paintings inspired by the execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1953—Fasanella did not exhibit them. His wife Eva even recalled hiding his monumental canvas *May Day* (1948) when neighbors dropped by.

Art critic Paul S. D'Ambrosio, who pens the exhibition's catalogue, suggests that the Red Scare pushed Fasanella toward nostalgic paintings of baseball and urban streetscapes as a way to "escape the burdens of 1950s left-wing politics." It's hard to deny the decline in his productivity and the turn away from explicitly political art, but his commitment to communicate with working people through a visual medium had not gone away.

The best work of his middle years is *Iceman Crucified #4* (1958), a dramatic portrait of an ice deliveryman in the pose of a crucifixion. In earlier works in the series, Fasanella had used the image to drive home an overly didactic point about the workingman crucified on the cross of capital. Here his critique is more subtle. In the 1950s, a new generation of Italian-Americans moved into the middle class and out of their parents' old neighborhoods. When they chose modern refrigerators over iceboxes, they were not just making the iceman's trade obsolete; they were choosing middle-class values over the working-class roots that had nurtured them.

By 1972, Fasanella had been painting for nearly two decades in almost complete obscurity while operating Happy and Bud's Service Station in the South Bronx. But that year, a chance encounter with a folk art scholar led to a *New York* magazine profile that thrust Fasanella into the public spotlight as never before. John Lennon and Yoko Ono were among 10,000 people who viewed his newly fashionable works in a 10-day exhibit at the labor gallery Automation House, and New York Mayor John V. Lindsay displayed Fasanella's work at City Hall.

It was a long-overdue reappraisal, but the enthusiasm for Fasanella was only partly related to his art. The early '70s was an opportune moment for a painter of Italian-American urban life: Fasanella easily fit into a white ethnic arc that reached from *Zorba the Greek* to *The Godfather*. In the '70s there was actually a moment when an assertion of white ethnic identity could be part of multiculturalism rather than a reaction against it. But there was also something ironic about the public's interest in paintings of a thriving community life in the South Bronx. At a time when 20,000-30,000 buildings were being abandoned every year—including Happy and Bud's gas station—vibrant canvases like *Dress Shop* (1972) were both heartfelt eulogies and angry protests. Two decades later, in *South Bronx Rebirth* (1995), Fasanella's trademark stickball games and lively street culture reappeared, paying tribute to the community activism that had fostered the neighborhood's dramatic rebound.

Fasanella himself was never comfortable with fame. After several years of restless artistic failure in the midst of unexpected financial success, he left New York in 1975 for Lawrence, Massachusetts, ready to embark on an ambitious new series of works. Lawrence had been the site of the 1912 Bread and Roses strike, where strikers under the banner of the Industrial Workers of the World achieved shorter hours and better working conditions by unifying men and women from more than thirty countries. From his base at the YMCA, Fasanella rose before dawn, met with local workers, studied labor history and observed the few remaining textile mills still in operation in what was, by 1975, a depressed mill town. He had aimed to present a sweeping history of the Bread and Roses strike. But the best paintings are those like *Mill Town-Weaving Department* (1976), which depicts the modern-day inhabitants of Lawrence hard at work in the abandoned mills that—on canvas anyway—Fasanella's historical imagination declared open for business.

The collapse of the Soviet Union blunted the revolutionary edges of Fasanella's art. While no fan of Soviet Communism—in the '30s, he

dismissed Communist demands for simplistic and ideologically driven proletarian art as "dogmatic ... bullshit"—Fasanella paid tribute to it in *Farewell, Comrade*, a sprawling canvas left unfinished at his death in 1997. "I'm in pain with this thing," he said, "because I believed in socialism and I never thought it would fall apart." But Fasanella's America is filled with moments of already-accomplished utopia: streetcorner stickball games, union halls, family suppers. It is also a place that is perpetually unfinished. One of American art's most sensitive history painters, Fasanella understood the crucial difference between living in the past and keeping the past alive.

In the last years of his life, Fasanella was touted as the next Grandma Moses, and it seemed as if America had found a place for his radical vision after all. Except for some carping about his shows in *National Review*, there was little hostility to the political content of his works. But in 1995, when Republicans retook control of the House of Representatives, they removed Fasanella's massive work *The Great Strike* (1978) from its prominent position on the walls of a Labor subcommittee hearing room on Capitol Hill. Fasanella protested, but he also expressed a sly satisfaction that his work was "good enough to intimidate the Republicans." Maybe he was still a disturbing artist after all.

As he summed it up on his own tombstone: "Remember who you are. Remember where you came from. Don't forget the past. Change the world." ■

Christopher Capozzola teaches history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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Detail from Ralph Fasanella's *Family Supper*, a painting "in memory of my father 'Joe'—the poor bastard died broke ..."

# Bread and Roses

By Christopher Capozzola

**T**he idea of a painter walking around an art gallery wearing a gas station attendant's shirt with the name "Ralph" stitched above the pocket, spouting off lines like "the function of the artist is to disturb," is an old cliché—and embarrassing to anyone but an art school sophomore. At first glance, it would seem that the painter Ralph Fasanella would fit right in among today's urban hipsters. But Fasanella, who really was a gas station attendant and who really was named Ralph, ought to make such people squirm in their shirts. *Ralph Fasanella's America*—an exhibition traveling to the Mennello Museum of American Folk Art in Orlando, and then on to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum—shows that in his monumental works and his equally dramatic life, Fasanella showed what it really meant for an artist to cause a disturbance.

In 1946, Fasanella left his job as a union organizer to devote more of his time to painting. Or, as Fasanella himself might have told the story, he didn't really leave his job at all. "I finally decided what the hell—it's a continuation of my work to be a painter." Rejecting the idea of art for art's sake, Fasanella sought to communicate a political vision to and about working people. For the next 50 years, he produced some of American art's most radical critiques of economic and political exploitation—as well as some of its most evocative visions of communal life.

Ralph Fasanella's biography is as compelling as his work. Born in 1914 in New York City's Italian-American community, Fasanella didn't set out to be a professional painter. He moved in and out of school, and reform school, before dropping out at age 15 to help support his mother and five siblings. In the midst of the Depression, Fasanella joined the Communist Party, fought with the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain and did organizing work for United Electrical, one of the CIO's most radical unions. While on vacation in New Hampshire in the summer of 1945, Fasanella drew for the very first time at the age of 31; his initial drawings have survived and show an immediate talent. Back in New York that fall, Fasanella worked obsessively through the nights, experimenting with a variety of styles and techniques. In little more than a year, he had his first one-man show.

The art was uniquely his own. Fasanella's canvases are enormous,



cramming whole worlds into a single frame. Swirls of color convey the lights of an ethnic street festival or the noise of a crowded baseball stadium. His was a world of ordinary working people in New York, making their way through a complex urban landscape and fighting back against the forces that tried to control them. But Fasanella's work is not a romantic celebration of city life in New York's ethnic heyday. Many of his scenes are forbidding and angry, the landscape overshadowed by a government hostile to labor activism and a church cruelly indifferent to workers' needs.

Fasanella first came to public attention in 1947, at a time when the art world was fascinated with "modern primitives," a term that Fasanella—who never considered himself a folk artist—always despised. He exhibited with socially conscious artists like Ben Shahn and Philip Evergood. He debated the value of abstraction with painters like Ad Reinhardt. (Fasanella didn't see much point to painting in such an inaccessible style.) He even frequented the Cedar Tavern, hangout of the Abstract Expressionists, but didn't find much inspiration there, either. Some gallery owners appreciated the freshness of his self-taught style; others might have been swayed by the tactics of the hardened radical activist who threatened to picket the leftist ACA Gallery as a "phoney social gallery" if it refused to display his work.

Fasanella's fame ended before it even started. After World War II, the screws tightened on radicals of every persuasion, and Fasanella found himself shut out of galleries and fired from his day job. He took on factory work and, disheartened by the political climate, painted more sporadically. Although he produced important works of social